

# **ASPECTS OF A DECONSTRUCTIVE STUDY OF AM MAPHUMULO'S POETRY**

by

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## **DECLARATION**

This research is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Masters of Literature and Philosophy (MA) in the subject African Languages at the University of South Africa.

I declare that **ASPECTS OF A DECONSTRUCTIVE STUDY OF AM MAPHUMULO'S POETRY** is my own work, and has not been submitted for any other degree in any other university.

Signature: .....

Date:

Bheka Stanley Ndlovu

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my daughters Nonhlanhla, Khethiwe and Nomfundo.

To my mother Hleza:

*Timande!*

*Bambo lunye zingaba zimbili ziya khabonina.*



## SUMMARY

This research examines the poetry of A.M Maphumulo by utilising selected strategies from the deconstructive literary theory. The exploration involves a critical analysis and application of deconstruction to isiZulu poetry, and more specifically to a selection of Maphumulo's poems. This research shows that deconstruction does not constitute a traditional analysis of poetry, but that the theory attempts to interplay various meanings at the same time without giving prominence to a singular meaning. Perceptions regarding deconstruction are highlighted such as that the readings merely dismantle creative works without contributing much to its value. This research sets out to prove this observation wrong by first providing a deconstructive thematic reading of two themes of Maphumulo; that of death and education. Furthermore, the deconstruction approach is outlined and applied with specific attention to the multiplicity of meaning in Maphumulo's poetry. Intertextuality and influence are also examined as it is evident that the poet Maphumulo was influenced by his culture, the Bible and nature, amongst other influences. It is shown how the poet synthesises different influences and styles of poetry into a new original mode. Although this research focuses on selected aspects of the deconstructive procedure in analysing isiZulu texts, it is finally recommended that more research should be effected on deconstruction, and especially on Maphumulo's poetry.

**KEY WORDS:** deconstruction, *différance*, dissemination, *écriture*, post-structuralism, trace, binary opposition, intertextuality

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Preamble

It is a well-known fact that the different literary genres, for example, the novel, drama, folktales and poetry are creative works which communicate messages to their audience, but in different formats. Particular requirements are set for the different genres, for example, a novel necessitates character portrayals, a plot and a setting, while poetry requires devices such as lines, stanzas, rhyme and rhythm. In a similar manner, different literary theories are sometimes utilized to critically analyse the various literary genres. These include modern literary theories such as formalism, semiotics, realism and structuralism, amongst others, which examine the writer, the text, the reader and the diverse mutual relationships they may have. Almost all of these theories seek to find meaning in these texts. On the other hand, deconstruction, one of the post-modernist theories, does not look for a particular meaning in a text, as it declares that true meaning is impossible to find.

This supposition has led to many criticisms being unleashed on the deconstruction theory. Critics of the theory do not support the belief that texts are indeterminate, thereby freeing interpretation from spurious controls. Hartman (2007: 269-270), a supporter of the deconstruction theory, has defended the indeterminacy of the text as follows:

As a guiding concept, indeterminacy does not merely *delay* the determination of meaning, that is, suspend premature judgements and allow greater thoughtfulness. The delay is not heuristic alone, a device to slow the act of reading till we appreciate ... its complexity. The delay is intrinsic: from a certain point of view, it is thoughtfulness itself.

Given the indeterminacy of literary texts, Hartman concludes that no form of closure should occur in interpretation. He however does admit that "...forms of closure will occur, whether we want them to or not" (Hartman, 2007:270). It may thus be assumed that although the deconstructive theory demands indeterminacy, there may be certain situations where texts will disclose definite closures.

Criticisms against the deconstructive theory furthermore mainly revolve around its deconstructive method, as this approach tends to threaten all forms of established literary conventions and traditional values. Such critics assert that "...either the facts make us right or [there is a] chaos of incommensurable interpretation" (Fischer, 1985: 45). For instance, Abrams (1979: 217) complains that a deconstructive reading is "parasitical" and "silly." He furthermore remarks that a deconstructive reading by Derrida can only *deconstruct* that which has previously been *constructed* in a conventional manner:

He (Derrida) cannot demonstrate the impossibility of a standard reading except by going through the stage of manifesting its possibility; a text must be read determinately in order to be disseminated into an undecidability that never strikes completely free of its initial determination; deconstruction can only subvert the meanings of a text that has always, already been construed (Abrams, 1986: 42).

Deconstructionists retort to these criticisms by stating that literary conventions constrain interpretation and "...are by essence violable and precarious *in themselves* and by the fictionality that constitutes them, even before there has been any overt transgression" (Fischer, 1985: 38). The father of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida himself, contested "...the legitimacy, not the necessity, of boundaries or conventions" (Fischer, 1985: 38). Fischer (1985: 45) supports Derrida's view in that:

...the members of the different communities will disagree because in each of their respective positions, the other cannot see what is obviously and inescapable there...

Lentricchia (1980: 94) further claims that "...too many generations of students came out of New Critical classrooms convinced that their teachers possessed knowledge of the 'hidden' meanings of texts to which there was no systematic and disciplined access". In contrast, deconstructive readings show how "texts cannot simply be read as works by individual authors communicating distinct messages, but instead must be read as sites of conflict within a given culture" (Fischer, 1985: 116). A deconstructed text will reveal a multitude of viewpoints simultaneously existing, often in direct conflict with one another. When comparing a deconstructive reading of a text with traditional one, the result will show how many diverse viewpoints are suppressed and ignored.

## **1.2 Research problem**

Despite the various criticisms against deconstruction, the theory remains a major force in contemporary philosophy and literary criticism and theory. However, the theory itself presents the first dilemma. Deconstruction asserts that any language is unavoidably rhetorical – as such, it sometimes "...becomes impossible to unravel the tropes of the language" (Mollema, 1998: 5). This research will demonstrate that this is indeed possible, and that the only solution may be to deploy "...a variety of rhetorical strategies, sometimes concurrently, in an attempt to illuminate the rhetorical maze" (Mollema, 1998: 5).

Furthermore, the value of deconstruction as a tool of critical analysis has not extensively been made use of in the African languages. This has led to a major lack of preceding examples in African deconstructive readings. Despite the deficiency, this study will attempt to highlight certain aspects of a deconstructive

critical analysis by utilising Maphumulo's poetry. This will be accomplished by engaging in a close and critical reading of the poet's texts in order to draw out the "...various orders of meaning (logical, grammatical and rhetorical) that organize the texts, and only then – with the strictest regard for such protocols – locating their blind spots of naïve or uncritical presupposition" (Norris, 1990: 140). The research will have to examine the accessibility of the selected poet's work to the theory with the intention of dissecting "...established meanings and receiv[ing] ideas by a hypercorrect analysis of rhetorical and semantic patterns" (Norris, 1990: 140). However, despite the critical procedures of deconstruction informing the surveys of parts of the poetry, the readings in this research will not be dictated to by these procedures only. It will be necessary in certain parts of the research to highlight additional strategies which influenced the poet's work. External contextual factors will be considered and contemplated upon for the sake of clarity and understanding. Although this is in contradiction with the internal nature of deconstruction, work by deconstructionists such as Derrida was not entirely intrinsic, and was also concerned with extra-linguistic facets.

### **1.3 Aim of study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the poetry of A.M. Maphumulo by utilising selected strategies from the deconstructive literary theory. The exploration will look at the relevance of an application of a deconstructive critical analysis to isiZulu poetry, and more specifically to Maphumulo's poems. In this endeavour, specific attention will be paid to the creative volumes of Maphumulo's poetry as a contributor in Msimang's *Izinsungulo* (Awls) (1980) and *Iminduze* (Natal lilies) (1986), as well as his own anthology *Izigi Zembongi* (Poet's footsteps) (2004). Before an application of the deconstructive theory to the selected material, the various deconstructive concepts which will be utilised in the study will be explained. In the application itself, deconstructive readings will be attempted in order to

unravel the indeterminacy of the 'hidden meaning' and 'word-play' found in the language exploited by Maphumulo which have various and different meanings. The outcome will reveal that post-structural literary theory plays an important role in isiZulu literature.

#### **1.4 Delimitation of scope**

This study will present a critical analysis of a selection of deconstructive concepts. As such, not all aspects of the deconstructive theory will be explained or applied to the literary works. This research will also not attempt to give a historical background to the theory. Only those concepts regarded as essential to the research will be elucidated. Lastly, although Maphumulo has written many literary texts, only the chosen works of poetry will be discussed. From these anthologies, a further selection will also be made by the author to illustrate the poems' multiplicity of meanings.

#### **1.5 Research method**

The focal point of this research is to view Maphumulo's poetic texts from deconstructive perspective and to give a general survey of the deconstruction theory and practice. This will mainly be done by first employing a qualitative research method which involves a literature study of books, journal articles, theses as well as interviews with experts. The study is primarily a critical analysis of the relevant literatures available on the subject. The primary sources for the examination will focus on the deconstructive theory, but any additional sources supplementing this theory will also be considered.

Maphumulo's poetry will be applied to the deconstructive theory. In analysing Maphumulo's poetry, the expository style of deconstructive reading is used, but

simple, basic linear argument is also employed. This is done because “...language is inescapably rhetorical; and that it is impossible to get behind, or get under or penetrate the figurative use of language by means of language” (Mollema, 1998: 9). Deconstruction is not regarded as a philosophy or as a “method”:

Jacques Derrida is careful to avoid this [‘method’] because it carries connotations of procedural form of judgement. A thinker with a method has already decided how to proceed, is unable to give him or her herself up to the matter of thought in hand, is a functionary of the criteria which structure his or her conceptual gesture. For Derrida ... this is irresponsibility itself (Beardsworth, 1996: 4).

Because there is no specific method or approach to the deconstructive practice, a reading will necessarily involve employing a variety of established ‘methods’ in order to illuminate the multi-faceted intricacy of the text. This is accomplished by extracting an excerpt in a work, and by pointing out just how problematic it is. While investigating Maphumulo’s poetry, only outstanding features from selected poems will be utilised to illustrate the multiplicity of meaning in the texts. As Maphumulo is an isiZulu poet who writes in his mother-tongue, his poems were translated into English by the author making use of all possible isiZulu dictionaries. These dictionaries informed the author for a literary translation of the poet’s work. As such, the main translation remains the author’s own interpretation.

## **1.6 Theoretical framework**

In order to comprehend the notion of deconstruction and its conceptions, it is necessary to provide some explanation of the technical terms employed by the theory.

### 1.6.1 Definition of technical terms

The term **deconstruction** derives from a school of contemporary philosophy that originated in France in the late 1960s which had an enormous impact on Anglo-American literary criticism. Largely the creation of its chief proponent - Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), who coined the term - deconstruction aims to upend Western metaphysical tradition (in particular). This is accomplished by means of a process by which texts appear to shift and complicate in meaning when read in light of the assumptions and absences they reveal within themselves (Kharbe, 2009: 365). It represents a complex response to a variety of theoretical and philosophical movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most notably Husserlian phenomenology, Saussurean and French structuralism, and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis (Kharbe, 2009: 366). Derrida's deconstruction was drawn mainly from the work of Heidegger and his notion of "Destruktion" but also from Husserl and his method of dismantling or unbuilding (Chin-Yi, 2009: 93).

The term itself denotes a particular kind of textual reading and a mode of analytical inquiry. In her book *The Critical Difference*, Johnson (1985: 4) clarifies the term as follows:

Deconstruction is not synonymous with "destruction" however it is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means "to undo" – a virtual synonym for "to de-construct." ... If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analysed the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself.

Another concept frequently used by deconstructions is **logocentrism** - a belief that knowledge is rooted in a primeval language (now lost) given by God to humans. God (or some other transcendental signifier such as the Idea, the Great Spirit, the



Self, etcetera) acts a foundation for all our thought, language and action. He is the truth whose manifestation is the world. He is the foundation for all the binaries by which man thinks: God/Man, spiritual/physical, man/woman, good/evil (Author, year: page). In these **binary oppositions**, a hierarchical relation of elements resulting from logocentrism is represented where the first term of the binary is valorised, and the chain of binaries constitutes a hierarchy. Derrida uses the word **pharmakon** to illustrate this logocentrism - this Greek word has two opposite meanings – “cure” and “poison”. As the word means two opposite things, it produces a constant play of binary oppositions.

The **supplément** – a term Derrida takes from Rousseau – is regarded as “...an inessential extra added to something complete in itself” (Culler, 2007: 103). Derrida argues that what is complete in itself cannot be added to, and so a supplement can only occur where there is an original lack. In any binary set of terms, the second can be argued to exist in order to fill in an original (or “originary”) lack in the first, in which one term secretly resides in another, Derrida calls **invagination** (Culler, 2007: 198).

The original lack indicates an absence, but also the presence of something that has gone. The present is known as the present only through the evidence of a past that once was a present. This is called a **trace**. The traces of other signifiers in any signifier mean that it must always be read under erasure. **Erasure** constitutes the decision to read a signifier or a text as if its meaning were clear, with the understanding that is only a strategy (Derrida, 1997: xx).

A deconstructive reading attempts to dismantle the binary oppositions which govern a text by focussing on **aporias** or impasses of meaning. A deconstructive reading will identify the **logocentric** assumptions of a text and the binaries and hierarchies it contains. Logocentrism entails the viewpoint that speech is a more important form of communication than writing as speech is closer to the original

source or thought. It will demonstrate how logocentric texts always undercut its own assumptions, its own system of logic. It will do this largely through an examination of the traces, suppléments, and invaginations in the text (Silverman, 1989: 72).

Derrida also coined the term **différance**, which is a pun on the terms difference and deference. Any signifier (or chain of signification, i.e. the text) must infinitely defer its meaning because of the nature of the sign (the signified is composed of signifiers) (Derrida, 1997: xiii). At the same time, meaning must be kept under erasure because any text is always out of phase with itself, doubled, in an argument with itself that can be glimpsed through the aporias it generates into the creative poetic writing (Silverman, 1989: 173).

All literary texts have relations to other texts which in their turn feed again on other texts. In this regard, Derrida has maintained that no text is actual an original text, as all have inherent plagiarism imbedded in them. The study of literature is therefore a study of **intertextuality** because the grammar and the syntax of language embody innumerable sources and influences. The term 'intertextuality' which is derived from Latin, was popularised by Julia Kristeva to elaborate a theory of the text as a network of signs and systems situated in relation to other systems of signifying practices in a culture. According to this theory, any text is in fact an intertext, the site of an intersection of numerous other texts. As such, there seems to be no originality in writing as anything in any text might have been present in the writings of other times. Maphumulo (2001: 32) notes that the theory of intertextuality insists that a text cannot exist as a self-sufficient whole and as such does not function as a closed system. It embraces things like influence and reference to other texts as it includes linkages between texts or writers where illusion, imitation, parody and influence would form part and parcel of intertextuality.

Deconstruction employs a process of **iterability** which is summarized by Frank (Zima, 2002: 45) most concisely: The meaning of a sign/an utterance is severed from itself by each use. In other words, iterability is the repetition or recurrence of a sign which dissolves the semantic identity of the very sign: first for pragmatic reasons (because of the difference between communicative contexts), secondly for semantic reasons (because of the change of meaning that occurs within the discursive context) (Zima, 2002: 45). Deconstruction is all about the tensions and instabilities within the text. Rhetoric can be reduced neither to grammar nor to logic. Language is inescapable rhetorical strategies - it is impossible to get behind or get under or penetrate the figurative use of the language by means of language. According to deconstruction, all that is possible is to employ a variety of rhetorical strategies, sometimes concurrently, in an attempt to illuminate the tropological, multifaceted intricacy of the text (Mollema, 1998: 9).

The basic assumptions of deconstruction can, therefore, be said to be the following:

- That language is ineradicably marked by instability and indeterminacy of meaning;
- That given such instability and indeterminacy, no method of analysis can have any special claim to authority as regards textual interpretation;
- That interpretation is, therefore, a free-ranging activity more akin to game-playing than to analysis (Fischer, 1985:36).

### **1.7 A biographical sketch of the poet A.M. Maphumulo**

Abednego Mandlenkosi Maphumulo was born on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1955 at Samungu in Eshowe, in Zululand, where he was also raised. His father is Bethuel Mzomubi and mother is Ivinah MaMpanza. He started his primary education in 1962 at Mombeni B.C. School, and went to Groutville Secondary School where he completed standard 7. He finished Form II and Form III at Nkwenkwezi Secondary.

He did his Matric at Dlangezwa High School near the mountain called Ngoye, and completed it in 1975. His school years made quite an impression on him as the emblem of his High School inspired him to pursue higher education with zeal and passion. He penned down this inspiration he received from his old school in the poem “*Izinsungulo*”.

Maphumulo is passionately devoted to writing poetry. He reconstructs where this enthusiasm about writing poetry originates from, as follows:

*Kusukela ngisemncane ngifunda ibanga lesihlanu nganginogqozi lwezinto ezibhaliwe. Ngangibhala izinkondlo eziqeshini zamaphepha ezazibuye zilahleke. Ngokuqhubeka ngazama ukubhala incwadi yami yezinkondlo, nokho ngabuye ngazenyeka ngibona ukuthi zilula. Ngangilokhu nginogqozi lokufunda imisebenzi yesiZulu. okuyiyona eyangihlaba umxhwele kakhulu yizinkondlo zawo-Otty Mandla Nxumalo, D.B.Z. Ntuli, B.W. Vilakazi and “Bulima Ngiyeke” (J.C. Dlamini)(Izinsungulo, 1980:47).*

(From youth when I was doing standard five I had the inspiration of writing things. I wrote poems on pieces of papers which got lost. As time went by I tried to write my own book of poems, nevertheless again I had an inferiority complex after I realized that the poems have literal meaning. I had since received inspiration from reading the creative works of Zulus, the one that gave me complete satisfaction are the poems of Otty Mandla Nxumalo, D.B.Z. Ntuli, B.W. Vilakazi and “Foolishness leave me” by J.C. Dlamini.)

He encountered many difficulties in life, including ailments. He was furthermore forced to do casual jobs; however that did not discouraged him from pursuing higher education. He obtained his U.E.D (Postgraduate Teachers Diploma) in 1984 and in the following year he obtained the B.A. degree at the University of Zululand. He became a junior lecturer between 1985–1986 at the University of Zululand and wrote an unpublished B.A. Honours article in 1985 entitled *A Critical Analysis of M.S.S. Gcumisa’s Poetry*. In 1986 he became one of the contributors in the book called *Iminduze* (Natal lilies). He also wrote an article called: “The Significance of

Traditional Courtship in the Enrichment of the Zulu language". This was first a paper which he delivered at the African Languages Association of South Africa's (ALASA) Fourth International Conference, which was held at the University of Transkei, Umtata, in 1987. This paper was developed in 1993 to become his M.A. dissertation entitled: *A Survey of Traditional and Modern Forms of Courtship with Special Reference to their Enrichment of the Zulu language*. In 1988 he became the author of *Amanoni Embuthuma* (Fat at a large log fire), an anthology of folktales, which was translated into seven other languages.

Professor Maphumulo has taught isiZulu since 1984 at various universities. He was promoted to the status of lecturer at the University of Zululand in 1986. He continued his studies and in 1988 obtained the B.Ed degree at the University of Zululand. He finally obtained his doctorate (DLitt et Phil) with a thesis entitled *A Study of D.B.Z. Ntuli's Radio Trilogy: Isivumelwano, Isivumelwano Esisha and Ngenxa Yesivumelwano* at the University of South Africa in 2001.

Maphumulo was promoted to an associate professorship at the University of Zululand. He currently teaches isiZulu at the University of KwaZulu-Natal which he joined in 1999. He has 19 years' service at this University at the Pietermaritzburg campus. He is also the Academic Coordinator in the School of isiZulu Studies. He is involved in academic issues and has won many awards. He has delivered papers on literature at local and international conferences. He has worked for the Department of Education, where he supervised research projects and evaluated other writers' creative works. Maphumulo shows artistic skills not only in poetry but in other genres, which have earned him admiration from prominent scholars such as C.T. Msimang and A. Siluma as evidenced from the following poem entitled "*Siqungqu Samakhosi*" (Earthen container of kings):

*Mthunzi wokuphumula Maphumulo  
Kuphumul' izicuthe neziqhaza,*

*Uzichathazela ngogwayi kaNolwazi,  
Phansi phezulu nguwe sizibakazi.  
Ujulile wadepha waxaka,  
Awakh' apholile amtoti,  
Owaphuzil'akomi noma nini. (Izibonkolo, 1992: 47)*

(Shade for resting Maphumulo  
Educated and uneducated people do rest,  
You serve small quantities of snuff of knowledge,  
You are deep high has entangled,  
Yours are cool and sweet,  
Who drinks does not get thirsty anytime.)

Maphumulo is indeed the shade of both the uneducated and educated yet still remains humble. He comes from an artistic family as his brother, Patrick Bhekizenzo Maphumulo, also writes isiZulu literature. Maphumulo is a member of various literary organisations such as the African Language Association of Southern Africa (ALASA), Literator; Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies (SAFOS) and also a member of the isiZulu National Language Board (UMZUKAZWE). He is the secretary of the Usiba Writers' Guild. He has been the evaluator of many published and prescribed books. Maphumulo has published a number of literary works. Some of the creative works by Maphumulo are:

*Ubhedu* (Fat of the pericardium) 1991(Folktales)

*Masikhe Ngenkezo Umqulu 1* (1995)

*Indwamba 3: Zulu Poems* (1996)

*Unqambothi* (Fine flavour) 1998 (Folktales)

*Amanothi Ngencwadi Amawisa* (Notes of the book large-headed knobkerrie) 1988  
(Short Stories)

*Amanothi Ngencwadi yedrama Ngavele Ngasho* (Notes of the book I have said so)  
1992 (Drama)

*Esithangamini sezethameli* (At the place for basking in the sun with the attendance) 2001 (Drama)

*Imvubelo* (Leaven) 2004 (Poetry)

*NCS Ebukeziwe IsiZulu Sanamuhla Esicebile: Gr 10: Learner's Book* (2008)

*Zidlana Imilala*. (2012)

*Izimvemvane* (2012)

Maphumulo has also written quite a few reviews on the work of other amaZulu writers, amongst which are in 1987 on J.J. Thwala's "*Amaqhabanga*"; in 1985 on S.J. Nkosi's "*USandanezwe KaSigwinyanansimbi*", in 1990 on M.S.S. Gcumisa's "*Ukugedeza Kwengede*", and also in 1990, on E.S.Q. Zulu's "*Amagekle*". Maphumulo has also co-written with other amaZulu writers, for instance in 1993 with J.J. Thwala (*Izibonkolo*); again with this writer in 1989 (*Uzwathi*) and in 1992 (*Izibonkolo*), in 1991 with Z.W. Gule and J.J. Thwala (*Ubhedu*), and in 2000 with P.B. Maphumulo (*Esithangamini Sezethameli*). As can be seen, Maphumulo is a diverse writer.

## **1.8 Literature review**

Regarding the theory of deconstruction, not much has been written in the African languages, as previously mentioned. Mollema wrote a thesis entitled *The Poetry of C.T. Msimang: A Deconstructive Critique* in 1998, wherein deconstruction is explained as a theory and applied to the poems of C.T Msimang. This research intends to follow a similar course, yet not all aspects of deconstruction will be discussed. Other researchers have chosen to focus on only one component of deconstruction, namely intertextuality. K.G. Nkumane has also researched Bloomian intertextuality in her M.A. dissertation entitled *A Study of L.B.Z Buthelezi's Poetry* (1995). N.J. Manyaka (1992) similarly did research on

intertextuality, but in seTswana in his dissertation entitled *Intertextuality in seTswana: The Novels of D P S Monyaise and M T Mmileng*.

There is more information available on A.M. Maphumulo's poetry. Maphumulo's poetry has been reviewed by various critics. In this regard, one may mention C.T. Msimang, who has written a review about Maphumulo's poems entitled: "*KwaMaphumulo zaphuma esibayeni*" (They were left without any cattle at Maphumulo's kraal) and "*eDlangezwa kwaNgqondonkulu*" (At Dlangezwa at the place of Ngqondonkulu (greatest mind)) in his book *Izibongo Izolo Nanamuhla Umqulu 1* (Praises Yesterday Today Volume 1). Msimang analyses the poems by sorting them according to their various themes. He further comments about the excellent manner in which Maphumulo uses word play, euphemism and the metaphor. From Msimang's appraisal, the point of departure is to further investigate these poetic features in depth.

In *Amasu ekufundeni IsiZulu* (Method of teaching Zulu) - an isiZulu study guide - C.T. Msimang continues his discussion of Maphumulo's poetry. Msimang focuses in this book on the subject matter found in "*Indwamba*" (Invalid) and "*Mina nesibani sami*" (My lamp and I) where he points out the hidden meaning of these poems. This research project will not only determine meaning, but will show the multiplicity of meanings in these poems. The deconstructive analysis however will show that all the different meanings in Maphumulo's poems are constantly deferred; thereby new meanings in the texts are also constantly being created.

## **1.9 Chapter outline**

In Chapter 1, an introduction to the topic will be given. It will be shown that deconstruction does not constitute a traditional analysis of poetry, but that the theory attempts to interplay various meanings at the same time without giving



prominence to a singular meaning. Perceptions regarding deconstruction will be highlighted such as the criticism that the readings merely dismantle creative works without contributing much to its value. The key deconstructive concepts will also be elucidated. A short biographical sketch of A.M Maphumulo will be given and the respective influences in his life presented. It will also be illustrated that there are hardly any research done on deconstruction in African languages as well as in isiZulu literature. More studies on deconstructive analyses in the isiZulu language are seriously needed. In this regard, this research will be a contribution.

Chapter 2 presents the theme death and education which are prevalent in Maphumulo's poetry. The deconstructive literary theoretical concepts will be applied on the selected poems of Maphumulo. Although other themes are present, for example, of love and death, the focal point of suffering is predominantly prominent in his poems. The deconstructive thematic reading is a prominent feature in this chapter. Every selected poem of Maphumulo represents an introspective quest. Maphumulo's poems guide one through the physical, emotional and intellectual maturity journey. His figurative language found in this poem will be investigated by deploying deconstructive concepts in order to reflect the various themes.

Chapter 3 develops and gives a theoretical outline and application of the deconstruction approach with specific attention to multiplicity of meaning in Maphumulo's poetry. Deconstruction is not primarily concerned with establishing priorities but with demonstrating how writing highlights the mechanism of *différance* and dissemination which are obliterated and repressed by privileging the spoken word. The fact that a word or the text can be repeated and interpreted in various contexts could then be quoted as evidence of a continual shift: a non-presence of the written sign. A deconstructive reading of the text might absurdly reveal that its author secretly implies the opposite of what he declares 'openly'.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the influence found in Maphumulo's poetry. The concept of intertextuality is elucidated. Intertextuality signifies that a literary text is linked to other, earlier texts by allusions or by the assimilation of the features of earlier texts. The poet is the reader of other poets before he is a creator of poems. The influences in Maphumulo's poems such as idioms, proverbs, traditional prose, and philosophy amongst others will be investigated. In this reading, one must be aware of double meanings as one has to compare the meaning of an earlier poem and that of a later one.

Chapter 5 gives the concluding remarks and recommendations.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter represents an introduction to the study. The research problem, aim of study and delimitation of the research were provided. It was seen that deconstruction does not follow the regular path of analyses. Traditional critics believe in a conventional reading where the unity of literary devices in poetry such as the structure, the theme and the meaning are sought after. Deconstruction identifies unity as problematic because of the indeterminateness of poetic language. The theory maintains that because language keeps on changing from context to context, reading and interpretation are not the same and cannot be the same. Therefore, for deconstructionists, the hidden "...internal and essential meaning of the poem is a charade that elites perpetrate to keep outsiders (students or readers) in their place. Only the poem says what it wants to say" (Fisher, 1985: 94).

Both criticisms against and counter-criticism for deconstruction were touched on. The theory of deconstruction and deconstructive concepts were briefly discussed. A short biographical sketch of the poet A.M. Maphumulo was provided and a

literature review completed. The primary objective of the study - the utilising of aspects of deconstruction in order to complement a traditional reading of Maphumulo's poetry - was clarified. It is anticipated that a deconstructive reading will draw many more possible meanings from Maphumulo's poetry than a traditional analyses would. It is argued that not enough ground has been covered in the area of deconstructive criticism; therefore this research will contribute to the existing knowledge of this field in African literature.

## CHAPTER 2

### DECONSTRUCTING THEMES IN MAPHUMULO'S POETRY

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#### 2.1 Introduction

The main task of this chapter is to deconstruct themes in Maphumulo's poetry. In this regard, the themes of death and education which are prevalent in Maphumulo's poetry will be examined. In this analysis, various deconstructive terms will be used in a selection of Maphumulo's poems. For example, in the elegy "*KwaMaphumulo zaphuma esibayeni*" (They were left without any cattle at Maphumulo's kraal), Maphumulo laments about his sister's death and his cultural expressions used which will form the basis for a deconstructive analysis. In the second poem to be examined, namely "*Ningakhele Inqaba Ngasolwandle*" (Built me a fortress next to the ocean); more philosophical aspects will be touched on. This poem revolves around the poet's wish to be buried next to the ocean when he dies. The poem "*EDlangezwa KwaNgqondonkulu*" (At Dlangenzwa at the place of greatest minds (Ngqondonkulu)) represents the theme of education which will also be analysed. The poet's life experiences are retold in "*Engikubone kwenzeka*" (My experiences about what I saw/noticed or observed). In this poem, the poet relates his disenchantment with the fact that modern or Western civilisation has influenced amaZulu culture to such a great extent. After a general introduction to the themes under discussion, a deconstructive analysis of these themes in Maphumulo's poetry follows in which the theory's viral matrix is employed to unlock a multiplicity of interplaying meaning. It will be seen that deconstruction may sometimes reveal additional meanings which the poet may not have been aware of when writing his poems. A deconstructive reading may even examine issues not mentioned by Maphumulo, as the traces defer meaning.

## **2.2 Themes in Maphumulo's poetry**

Themes are generally described as the main ideas or underlying meaning of a literary work. These ideas may be stated directly by the author or indirectly sourced from traces unconsciously left by the author. Themes are again grouped into major or minor themes. In the following section, the major themes of Maphumulo will be examined and deconstructed. It will be seen that although an author may state certain themes directly, there are many other themes which also may feature in a poem. Also, it will be seen that certain meanings may be very evident in a poem, but these meanings may still be further analysed for more extensive descriptions.

### **2.2.1 The theme of death**

One of the major themes found in Maphumulo's poetry is that of suffering and death, with the added connotation that such suffering only makes a person stronger. Suffering in Maphumulo's poetry is the pain or grief felt when a person loses someone or something of value or that which is precious to a person. Suffering is triggered primarily by the sense of loss that occurs when one loses something or someone to which one has become attached to. People tend to form strong bonds with others, which may be threatened or broken. According to Bowlby (1977: 29) we do not form these attachments primarily to satisfy our biological drives, but rather to fulfil our needs for security and safety (Van Dyk, 2010: 301). This suitably illustrated in Maphumulo's poems on suffering and death.

### **2.2.2 The theme of education**

Maphumulo uses the theme of education in his poetry to perpetuate values and culture and to prepare all people to face the challenges of the future. As a product of his own experiences, Maphumulo has a vision that through education, culture and values are vital to shaping a healthy future. A person's history, heritage, traditions and culture are an inheritance that defines who they are, where they

come from, and why they should be proud. His philosophy is that all people are a part of the influences of things that they experience in their lives. Through education, the lives of children can be influenced positively. Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Education is not simply the classroom experience of memorizing facts. In analysing his poetry, Maphumulo's educational history reveals a lot of information about his personality and his socio-economic status.

### **2.3 Deconstructing themes in Maphumulo's poetry**

By applying deconstructive strategies, one can uncover much from analysing the themes in Maphumulo's poems. The deconstructive analysis of selected themes in the following sub-sections will furthermore establish whether Maphumulo was influenced by amaZulu culture or Western culture in his poems. This analysis will mainly make use of phenomenology. Phenomenology is about the philosophy of how structures/phenomena of consciousness are experienced from a first-person point of view. An experience is always intentionally directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. This experience is aimed at an object by means of its content or meaning. The philosophy basically deals with appearances and one's awareness of those appearances. In this regard, intuition is a direct approach to the inner structure of consciousness itself. A phenomenological reduction as to language involves binary oppositions which are two kinds of signs and their hierarchy which must be expressive and indicative. By reducing language to binaries implies that meanings have histories of textual relations. It is presumed that all meanings are necessarily occupied by residual traces of other meanings. No meaning is ever present or present; every meaning is derived from and owes its significance to meanings that exceed the immediacy of any setting. With the question of meaning there is, therefore, always a *différance*, an occurrence of *différance*.

Deconstruction subsequently affects literary interpretation and analytical philosophy. The result is a profound change in understanding: that what is signified by a Saussurian signifier is not always constant. While language itself may be endlessly self-referential, it is still possible to continue thinking linguistically, grammatical but only with uncertainty. Thereby, all meanings are destabilized and better understandings are those which acknowledge this instability in meaning.

### 2.3.1 The theme of death

Both the poems “*KwaMaphumulo zaphuma esibayeni*” (They were left without any cattle at Maphumulo’s kraal) (*Izinsungulo* 1980: 40) and “*Ningakhele Inqaba Ngasolwandle*” (Built me a fortress at the ocean) (*Izigi Zembongi*, 2004: 12) have the theme of death. Although both these poems have elements of cultural constructs, a deconstructive analysis is very revealing. In the first poem, the poet mourns the death of his sister Fakazile who died at a young age:

*KwaMaphumulo zaphuma esibayeni*

1. *Fakazile, walifakazela elikaMzomubi igama:*
2. *UMaMpanza wayebabikela ngokufika kwentombi,*
3. *Egcekeni eSamungu uthihlazela mntakamama,*
4. *Wafika wakudoba owomubi umdobi,*
5. *MntakaMaphumulo egunjini usuwaphumula,*
6. *Mgobode njengomakoti kuleyo ndlu usuwagobodisa.*
7. *Mashimane ezilingweni zomhlaba washima,*
8. *Lakukhetha isoka lobubi kwabaningi,*
9. *Lakhukhusa liqholoshile basala bekhala,*
10. *Izinyembezi zamatisa, seladuma ledlula*

- (1. Fakazile you have indeed confirmed the name Mzomubi;
2. MaMpanza had informed her ancestors about the birth of the girl,
3. At Samungu the chubby one arrived at the kraal yard,
4. The evil one arrived and took your life,
5. Maphumulo’s child, you are now resting in the grave,

6. Like the bride, in the grave you have bowed.
7. Mashimane's daughter in the world of sorrow you died at a tender age,
8. The lover of evil picked you from multitudes,
9. Death arrogantly snatched you and the family grieved,
10. After her death the family kept on grieving.)

Msimang (1986: 160) states the following about the poem:

*Phela iligugu intombazane ngoba kuye kuthiwe zibuyile izinkomo ezalobola unina. Nokho ngokushona kukaFakazile lezonkomo kufana nokuthi zaphuma sezisesibayeni.*

(Indeed a girl is said to be precious because when she gets married it is often mentioned that the cattle that were used as *ilobolo* (dowry) for the mother of the bride, have been returned/substituted. Nevertheless, when Fakazile passed on it is just like those cattle moved out when they were already in the kraal.)

In the amaZulu culture, a girl is precious because she brings wealth or cattle after the groom has paid '*lobola*' to his in-laws, in this particular instance, MaMpanza. The death of Fakazile resulted in the cattle never being repaid, (the MaMpanza's *lobola* – cattle given to the bride,) being like those owed cattle left the kraal. The cattle given to the bride's family and the kraal are the cultural symbols which according to Derrida, if one violates these kinds of restraints, "the police is always waiting in the wings" (Derrida, 1988: 105) precisely because the conventions that constrain interpretation "are by essence violable and precarious, in themselves and by fictionality that constitutes them, even before there has been any overt transgression" (Fisher, 1985:38). In Msimang's quote above, he filled the ellipsis on the heading with the word "cattle". The death of Fakazile was a future loss of the wealth or the repayment of bridal cattle. A simple comparison in this regard will equate Fakazile's death with loss of cattle and loss of wealth. In this regard the opposite means that Fakazile (and her wedding) is associated with the acquisition of cattle and the accumulation of wealth.



In the case of death in an amaZulu family, the person is buried in the kraal which is traditionally situated in centre surrounded by the family huts. Nyembezi and Nxumalo (1966: 39) call a kraal a religious “temple”: it is in the kraal that the grandfather or grandmother will talk to the ancestors and a ritual would be performed including the slaughter of the cow. Hence, “*UMaMpanza wayebabikela ngokufika kwentombi*” (MaMpanza was informing the ancestors about the arrival of the grown-up girl). This is done as there is a belief that the ancestors would protect the child from evil spirits. The kraal is also in the form of a circle, a universal symbol of extensive meaning since the beginning of time. The shape of the circle represents the notions of wholeness, totality, infinity, timelessness, and all cyclic movement. The circle symbolizes the power of the female as it is regarded as a yonic symbol; it signifies the female womb; a sign of generative power. It is of much significance that a kraal, which is of such importance in amaZulu culture, epitomizes a woman such as Fakazile.

The death of Fakazile was such a shock in the Samungu homestead, as she was young and she was stout. The author exhibits the typical five stages of bereavement in his poem, as explicated by Kübler-Ross (1969: 4); that of shock and denial, anger, bargaining, depression and finally acceptance. The poet expressed anger at his father named Mzomubi (house of the bad omen), dejectedly pronounces the clan praises of Mashimane (without a sweetheart) and finally shows resolution and acceptance. It is expected that at the final stage the person may come to terms with his loss as expressed in the longing “*Izinyembezi zamatisa, seleduma ledlula*” (There was an outpouring of tears, long after the thunder storm had long passed). The poet mourns his sister’s death but must return to normal life. His father’s name becomes the scapegoat as the poet blames his name of Mzomubi (house of bad omen) for his sister’s death. Mystical theories explain misfortune in terms of an automatic consequence of some act or experience of the afflicted person. Blaming someone or something for a death is

not an unusual occurrence in this regard. For instance, the Bible states that “death is caused by sin which entered into the world through one man [Adam], and thus death spread to all women because they had all sinned” (Romans 5:12). As such, all death should ultimately be connected to the fall of Adam in paradise and Satan. The Bible does not minimize the power of Satan to kill people, as John 8 verse 44 proclaims that “He was a murderer from the beginning”. However, instead of focusing on the obvious reason for the occurrence of death, the poet chose to centre his anger on his father. In this sense, his father becomes original sin, the origin of death.

In terms of logocentrism, the prominent binaries in this first part of the poem are good/bad and life/death. Similar to other cultures, good and evil may be represented in terms of colour. In isiZulu, evil is ‘-mnyama’ (black) and ‘umnyama’ (darkness); i.e. the darkness of the night. It also represents death. *Umnyama* also refers to pollution; and polluted persons are said to be without any light and in the darkness (Ngubane, 1977: 114). The colour white again is associated with good and pure; that is why the ancestors are white (Ngubane, 1977: 120; Berglund, 1989: 371). With binary opposition between ‘good’ and ‘bad’, Mzomubi falls under ‘bad’, and also the clan praise ‘Mashimane’, from “-shima” is translated as to ‘be without a sweetheart’. When the prefix ‘isi-’ is attached as “*isishimane*”, the meaning is ‘a man who is not successful in courtship’ - these are curses or cultural “*umnyama*” the death of Fakazile has caused. Death is also compared to fishermen who came and lured Fakazile; to a lover who mesmerizes girls and then sneaks them away. In line 6 again, the double meaning of “-goboda” (bend forward, droop over or induce, compel) is cleverly utilised. Fakazile has been forced to bend over, to bow her head in death. In the fifth line, the poet declares: *MntakaMaphumulo egunjini usuwaphumula* (Daughter of Maphumulo at the corner of the room you have already rested). The reference to Fakazile resting in the corner of the room refers to the cultural tradition where the corpse would be placed in the sitting position at the “*emsamo*” (the upper corner of the hut). All members of

the family, except the kraal head, were buried inside the outer fence of the kraal. After the completion of the digging, the body would be fetched from the hut and carried to the grave by the relatives of the deceased. The men would then lead the procession, while the women would follow behind. Nobody would cry as the funeral procession moved to the grave. No children were allowed at the graveside. Only close relatives were permitted to see the deceased. On arrival at the grave, the body was then laid on the terrace which had been dug out in the side of the grave. All the belongings of the deceased, except the principal assegai and other weapons (in the case of men) were buried with the person. The deceased's own brother would then go into the grave to place the body in its place. The grave became a house for the deceased. The person who died was laid to rest in a vertical position as if seated and wrapped in cow skin. Death had conquered the young girl and those left behind wept.

However, the word "*umnyama*" is also connected to birth as explained by Ngubane (1976: 274):

The source of pollution is a happening that is associated with birth on the one hand, and death on the other. Both birth and death are mysteries associated with the 'other world' from which people come and to which people return. Although 'this world' and the 'other world' are viewed as separate entities, the beginning of life whose source is believed to be in the 'other world' happens in this world and the cessation of life in 'this world' is believed to mean continuity of life in the 'other world'.

One can see the pharmakon here as the two opposite concepts of life and death collapses into a multifaceted exchange of meaning. That which has passed on is still alive, and being born is the beginning of death. Similarly, amaZulu culture believes that the ancestors are dead but still alive. In this sense, death means being born again, just as Fakazile was born again as an ancestor, she is living on. The juxta-positioning of these two binary oppositions opens up the possibility that

the reversal of the hierarchical valuation may be more suitable, which again questions the very border between the two concepts. These concepts thus become undecidables.

In the undecidable of *abaphansi/amathongo*, *abaphansi* is translated in English with the word 'ancestors', although this translation contains the meaning of 'deceased persons' which is incorrect. The term *abaphansi* in itself is already a binary opposition - 'those below/under' - are with us, are all around us, up above, "the living dead" (Mbiti, 1969: 34). The *abaphansi* might either be alive or dead. But they cut across these categories: they are both dead and alive. Equally they are neither alive nor dead, since they cannot take on the 'full' senses of these terms. The concept of *abaphansi* short-circuits the usual logic of distinction. Having both states, they have neither. They belong to a different order of things: in terms of life and death, it cannot be decided. Ancestors are inscriptions of the failure of the 'life/death' opposition. They show where classificatory order breaks down: they mark the limits of order.

Death and mourning take the centre stage in this poem. Mourning in amaZulu culture is of much significance and mourning behaviour and periods are prescribed. For example, for people of lesser status, and for sons and daughters, the mourning period is much shorter than for adults of stature. A small child is mourned for an even shorter time, and a baby for only about a month (Bleeker & Sasaki, 1970: 75). The death of any person was regarded as a solemn occasion. Mourning also features strongly in the writings of Derrida and other deconstructionists:

One must mourn. Mourning consists of taking the other into ourselves, grieving for what was, for what has happened and for what will no longer be. For mourning to be successful, the other must not be interiorized but ejected. The other who is mourned must be birthed. But this ejection is a betrayal to the memory of the one we have loved (Secret, 2015: 193, quoting Žižek).

Derrida even links deconstruction with the act of mourning:

Derrida is not interested in possible mourning which interiorizes the other who somehow 'lives in us' but in impossible mourning which leaves 'the other his alterity, respecting thus his infinite remove (that) refuses to take or is incapable of taking the other within the self' (Secret, 2015: 192)

Possible mourning is described by Derrida as internalizing the dead – “those who clearly no longer exist *in themselves* as they did when alive” (Secret, 2015: xviii) – but who will live eternally in the memories of others. Impossible mourning, on the other hand, is an aporia because of the ethical restriction to preserve both the memory and the alterity (otherness) of dead friends. Derrida (1995: 152). illustrates the double constraint of mourning as follows:

I cannot complete my mourning for everything I lose, because I want to keep it, and at the same time, what I do best is to mourn, is to lose it, because by mourning, I keep it inside me.

Mourning contains an element of reflective conscious self-identity as the act makes one long for “lost objects of libidinal attachment” (Secret, 2015: xviii). Mourning does not only involve the events that befall one in the aftermath of an actual death, but denotes entire processes of love and friendship, as well as internal dialogue with the self. It signifies thus a relationship with the self as well. In this regard, although the poet mourns the death of his sister, internal structures of love and friendship are emphasized and the self is questioned. Derrida accentuates the fact that “the things of friendship and of thought” cannot be separated (Secret, 2015: xxvi). Thus, when we form friendships, we are already mourning the possible end of such friendships, which Derrida calls a state of originary mourning. “Mourning and eulogy are thus permanent states that we are already involved in and already

learning from” (Secret, 2015: xxvi). The following stanzas continue the subject matter of mourning in this poem:

11. *Izinyembezi zezinkulungwane zaba ngamanzi okuphuza,*
12. *Bakuhlinzeka bakuhlinzeka usuyisishosha safuthi esingenakuphela,*
13. *Isililo sabaningi saphenduka umculo,*
14. *Bathunduzela kulowo mlalela wafuthi.*
15. *Zikode awusenakulibona iziko elide,*
16. *Cwalile ontanga abasenakukucwala kade,*
17. *Ekhandab abasenakukweluka isic[k]holo,*
18. *Awusenakushayela phezulu ngezicathulo,*
19. *Awusenakuzigqoka ezobuntombi izingubo,*
20. *Awusenakuzibopha dadewethu okhalo.*

- (11. A multitude grieved for her,
12. They prepared your everlasting journey,
13. Countless tears turned into a song,
14. They comforted the bereaved family,
15. Zikode you will no longer experience the world's comforts,
16. Cwalile your peers will never see your beautiful hair,
17. They will no longer plait your hair,
18. You will no longer feel the joy of wearing high heels,
19. You will no longer be dressed in beautiful clothes,
20. You will no longer be able to show off your tiny waist.)

The poem reveals that many mourners lamented the death of Fakazile. The many mourners are not surprising as black funerals are an affair of the community - many people attend including uninvited guests, thus amounting to huge expenditures. Funerals in the amaZulu community are marked by elaborate ceremony (Bleeker & Sasaki, 1970:70). The poet expresses that “*izinyembezi zezinkulungwane zaba ngamanzi okuphuza*” (tears of the thousands became drinking water), “*isililo sabaningi saphenduka umculo*” (the lamentations of many people became a song). These lines have a biblical ring to them.

Line 12 regards the future preparation for an everlasting cripple. Fakazile is described as a cripple, a person who through some injury is unable to walk. In the following lines, the poet continues with the theme that Fakazile is alive and not dead for she must quieten the mourners or comfort them (line 14). However, as Ecclesiastes 9 verses 5 and 6 states: "For the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all, their love and their hate and their jealousy have perished, and they have no portion anymore to time indefinite in anything that has to be done under the sun". It is the mourners who should quieten or comfort the bereaved family and not those who are at everlasting sleep. Lines 15 to 20 describe customary acts which small to grown girls such as Fakazile used to do. She will no longer see a long fire-place and plait head-knots. In the word "*isicholo*" the consonant "k" is replaced by "c" to produce "*isikholo*", which further indicates amaZulu female customs of plaiting hair. She cannot dress in the clothing of a woman and tie a waistband around her waist. According to amaZulu age groups, this indicates that Fakazile was a grown woman (*intombi*) and the same stage as an "*iqhikiza*" (a girl of marriageable age), which ties in again with the initial lines concerning loss of wealth and cattle. The repetition of the word "*awusenaku*" ('you will no longer') is indicative of a resolution and acceptance that the poet came to terms with the loss of his sister. It does not mean that the person has forgotten his loss but that the person can move on with his life. However, these words are contrary to the amaZulu belief that the spirit of the person lives on forever.

The amaZulu strongly believe in life after death – this is evident in the objects which accompanied the person who passed on, such as the "*umcamelo*" (the wooden head-rest for sleeping), a snuff receptacle with "*ishungu*" (snuff) and a small "*ukhamba*" (earthenware pot) which were placed alongside the body as if ready for the future (Maphalala, 1985:75). A young girl such as Fakazile would be placed in a crouching position; her water and pots in front of her, a water gourd in one hand so that she will be able to scoop up water from a stream, as she did in their life. The deceased's own brother would even spread out grass mats for the

deceased. If the deceased's own brother was not available, these functions inside the grave were performed by the chief wife (Maphalala, 1985: 13). This belief illustrated in the poem supports the biblical notion more as found in Ecclesiastes 9 verses 5 and 10: "For the living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all ... All that your hands to do, do with all your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in She' ol (grave) the place you are going". The binary opposition of conscious/unconscious is very obvious in the above excerpt and similar to the life/death binary becomes decomposed.

21. *Wafikela ukuhamba, wahambela ukufika;*
22. *Ushambile yafika intombi uPhumzile,*
23. *Izophumuza ekufikeni kokuhamba kokufika.*
24. *Othandazwayo eyabo imithandazo wayeyizwile,*
25. *Asivalekanga esakho isikhala sokufika.*
26. *Ngakucabangela iziziba ezidephile nezijulile,*
27. *Ngakwehlukisela lokhu wawudle ngokwehluka,*
28. *Wawungempaka njalo wawunguzithulele.*
29. *Ngiyokwethaba uma laphe ukhona unguNokuthuthuka,*
30. *Kusasizani mangithule ngoba uthule.*

- (21. Whilst she was a baby she died prematurely;
22. After your death, the baby girl Phumzile was born,
23. Her birth will bring relief to the bereaved family,
24. Jehovah answered their prayers,
25. However, the family kept on missing you,
26. I had deep thoughts about you,
27. You were special because you were different,
28. You were not a wild child but you were Zithulele,
29. I will be happy if wherever you are you will remain being Nokuthuthuka,
30. Let me be quiet because you are gone)

According to Msimang, this part of the poem concerns the mourning of the poet's sister who died at birth:



*Kule nkondlo uMandla ulila isililo sikadadewabo owashona esandakuzalwa.*

(In this poem Mandla mourns the lamentation of his sister who died at her birth).

In this stanza the words “-fika” (come) and “-hamba” (go) are found, which can be interpreted in more than one way. The recurrence of the binaries come/go in lines 21-23 is not only wordplay, but again emphasises the fact that birth/death is coming/going into different worlds; however it may also be reversed – when one dies you enter another world, thus you come into the new world. The name Phumzile in line 22 is both a remedy for death but also a pharmakon. As the poet states in line 23, ‘she (Phumzile) is going to relieve the one who has arrived (Fakazile)’. Phumzile acts as a supplement to Fakazile. According to the logic of the supplement, Phumzile is equated to Fakazile, and becomes Fakazile. She is figured twice, as Fakazile-Phumzile and as the supplement Fakazile. In Freudian terms, displacement occurs – an unconscious defence mechanism whereby the mind substitutes a new object for an old one in order to allay anxiety (Berne, 1976: 399).

Two interesting metaphors used in this last part of the poem are that of “*iziziba*” (deep pools) and “*izimpaka*” (wildcats). Both these words have profound cultural meaning, and may be associated with other issues in the poem. According to Berglund (1989: 144), deep pools are where the ancestors gather. As Fakazile has now become an ancestor, the ‘deep pools of thought’ in the excerpt is appropriate. The pool has, according to Zulu culture, other associations as well, which substantiates the idea of a new life. A pool is the place of ‘*uhlanga*’, in other words the origin of man. The reeds are the carriers of water; they penetrate the earth, causing conception of man (Berglund, 1989:144). The pool of water can also be associated with the water surrounding a child in the womb, which again signifies water of birth. As such, “*iziziba*” is associated with death and life. Also, wild cats again are associated with witchcraft as these animals are considered witches’ familiars by the amaZulu. The use of the imagery of dwarfs in this poem also hints

at witchcraft, as these dwarfs may be “*otikoloshe*”, assistants of sorcerers. It is the belief of the amaZulu diseases and death are brought about by sorcery and witchcraft. Evil may also emanate from a person's incorrect behaviour, which angers the ancestors. Perhaps they had failed to observe a custom or ate certain food that is forbidden to their clan, or touched a sacred object that should not be touched. The punishment meted out by the offended ancestral spirits is sickness and death. With sacrifices and other rituals and the help of the medicine men, their anger can be appeased, and the sick person will get well. Should the sick person die, his family believes that their effort to placate the spirit failed (Bleeker & Sasaki, 1970: 70). Being compared to a wild cat brings to this poem an element of wickedness, of sin, which is the cause of all death. In this sense, the circular ending of the poem further emphasizes the life-cycle and the life/death binary.

The following poem “*Ningakhele Inqaba Ngasolwandle*” (Izigi Zembongi, 2004: 12) to be analysed further features themes of death, mourning and eulogy, but also contains cultural elements and historical allusions:

1. *Ngasolwandle ngaphansi kweSibubulung' esikhophozayo,*
2. *Duzane nolwandl' olusin' ugweme,*
3. *Ngakumanz' aphothanayo nasezihlabathin' ezigqibanayo,*
4. *Ningakhel' inqaba yamaFulensh' engumpheme,*
5. *Siyongikhanyisela ngobhaqa ngipheshethw'obandayo,*
6. *Ulwandle luyongiculel' ingom' ephakeme,*
7. *Ngiyovakashelw' abafana boqung' abadishazelayo*
8. *Bezongiqung' isibindi ngezimpande ngisimame.*

- (1. Near the ocean under the sloping Sibubulungu,
2. Near the tossing ocean,
3. At the waters that are entangled and the sandy soil,
4. Build me a French fortress shelter,
5. The light will shine upon me and I will feel the cold breeze,
6. The ocean will sing me a moving song,
7. Dwarfs will come and visit me
8. And encourage and give me strength.)

In the poem the narrator describes his wish to be buried on a beach at the seaside. Since the amaZulu believe that a person's spirit lives on forever, they bury their dead in a way that will fit the person's status in the kraal. This is done in order to ensure proper reception for them in the new world to be entered. It is thus strange to find the poet wishing to be buried on a seaside beach, which goes against amaZulu tradition. However, this opens the text up to new interpreting possibilities.

This poem illustrates the deconstructive notion that, in reading a text, what is comprehended is never absolute meaning, but 'traces' of meaning, only pointing towards possibilities of meaning. By interpreting all the various attempts of meaning, basic assumptions are undone and the way texts are usually read questioned. This is known as *différance*; the way meaning is not contained within a word or sign itself but is to be found in the relations and contrasts signifiers share among each other.

The sea is an important symbol in psychoanalytic studies, as it signifies the personal and the collective unconscious, "because unfathomed depths lie concealed beneath its reflecting surface" (Jung, 1985: 111). Jung further states that the "sea is a favourite place for the birth of visions (i.e. invasions by unconscious contents)" (Jung, 1985: 192). When one examines this poem, this certainly rings true. The poem represents a type of collage, full of fantastic imagery, which makes it readily suitable for a psychoanalytic interpretation. By making use of the sea-metaphor, the narrator explores his emotions, his dreams and fantasies, delving into his subconscious, his soul. His wish to be buried next to the sea reveals his search for inner tranquillity.

The sea may also be equated to pure nature. The ocean denotes untouched or unspoiled nature. Being close to the sea can represent connectivity to nature. This is already seen in the poem as the poet wishes to be covered by sandy soil,

becoming one with the earth, and as a tree, grow roots. This again connects with the last epitome of the sea: that of a primal state. The sea represents a primal purity, an “original” condition from which all things arise. Many myths in the world regard gods or heroes to have their origins in the sea. There are furthermore various creation stories where a champion must dive to the bottom of the sea to bring up some mud out of which the dry land was formed.

The narrator presents the sea in contradictory ways: as powerful but serene; beautiful but dangerous. The poet wants to be buried near or next to the ocean on the beach where the sea waves will sing to him a high song. Again, a binary is presented in line 5, that of warm/cold (which also correspond with the life/death binary). For the image of heat or warmth, the poet makes use of the light grass used by the amaZulu as candles, while the wind blows cold air. Death and a grave are normally considered cold; however, no cold wind reaches below the earth. As such, one can deduce that the narrator becomes cold from the wind on the earth, but feels warm in his shelter under the soil. In this manner, the binary of warm/cold is again reversed. In the following excerpt, the narrator again focuses on the colour white which is associated with the ancestors (in the form of dwarfs who revive him in line 7).

9. *Kulapho ngiyoboniswa uDlungwane lukaNdaba,*
10. *Lugwaza ngeklw' ulwandi' oluhhahhamayo,*
11. *Olunobutumush' obungashayelwa nsimbi zakwamhlaba,*
12. *Obungaluthwa ngentomb' emhlophe yakwaPhakathwayo.*
13. *Ngiyosing' uNodumehlez' ephezu kwentaba,*
14. *Esicongweni saseKhangel' egqolozele ngangacwayiziyo,*
15. *Ephephezelis' olwegwalagwal' olubomv' usiba,*
16. *EKhangel' amankengane ngebomv' inhliziyo.*

- (9. Over there I will be shown King Shaka,
10. Stabbing the rumbling sea,
11. Using the unstoppable red ants,
12. Which cannot be misled by Phakathwayo's beautiful lady.

13. On top of the mountains, I will closely look for King Shaka,
14. Staring with unblinking eyes on top of Khangela,
15. Flapping the red feather,
16. At Khangela with anger, he looks at the destitute.)

The second stanza imports historical facets into the poem. The narrator hopes to see “*UDlungwane kaNdaba*”, a praise name for King Shaka, a great amaZulu leader. Born in about 1787, Shaka built up a magnificent fighting force, conquering and uniting all the clans into one amaZulu chiefdom. Shaka invented the short stabbing spear for stabbing enemies at close range which replaced the traditional longer, throwing spear. He was also named “*iklwa*”, literary meaning broad-bladed spear (Bleeker & Sasaki, 1970: 111). It is thus not unusual that the poem at this stage mentions the act of stabbing with a broad-bladed spear and iron of the world. The image of Shaka stabbing at the roaring waves evokes previous reflections of the sea as metaphor. It could thus be suggested that Shaka is challenging his subconscious, his emotions.

Line 12 “*Obungaluthwa ngentombi emhlophe yakwaPhakathwayo*” also has a historical origin as it refers to the incident when Dingiswayo, the Mthethwa chief, was killed by the jealous chief Zwide, who lured him to his kraal by offering his daughter, Ntombazi, in marriage. The chief had been practicing black magic over Dingiswayo for a long time, and so was assured that his plan to murder would succeed. Dingiswayo had singled out Shaka as his successor, and upon his death Shaka immediately took charge (Bleeker & Sasaki, 1970:119). Dingane kaSenzangakhona and Mhlangana, two of Shaka's half-brothers, struck against Shaka, who was assassinated at his residence in late September 1828, the site of present-day Stanger kwaDukuza (Morris, 1998: 93). The narrator makes use of another praise name for Shaka “*uNodumehlezi*” (he who sits while famous), featuring Shaka sitting on top of Khangela staring without winking as if not conscious. This stanza also duplicates the colour red in ‘red ants’, ‘red feather’ and ‘red heart’. In all these images, red represents strength, anger and royalty. In

amaZulu tradition, the feathers of the loerie are a sign of royalty. However, the loerie is thought to use its red wing feathers to escape predators. It is thus ironical that Shaka, who wore these feathers, was not able to escape his assassins.

17. *Ulwandle luyocwebis' amaqaphel' aluhlaza,*
18. *Luzokhuza lupheth' amagobolond' angamagugu,*
19. *Ngiyothunduzelw' ihelehele ngezandl' ezingenakuphanza,*
20. *Izinyon' ezimhlophe zasolwandle zobangamagagu,*
21. *Zingiculel' ingom' emadlozini zishweleza,*
22. *Ngonyezi ngiyogcogcom' ezinkwazini nginjengenkungu,*
23. *Ulwandle ludons' izikhumba lunyikiza,*
24. *Ngidl' ezimhlophe nginqwaze ngojobe wegugu.*

- (17. The sea will be purified,
18. The sea will triumphantly carry treasure sea shells,
19. The gentle breeze will lull me with hands that doesn't plead,
20. The whites will sing beautifully,
21. They will appease me to the ancestral spirits,
22. In the moonlight, like a mist, I will be excited
23. The sea will be calm,
24. I will be adorned with the white attire.)

This stanza represents a lyrical ode to the sea, its treasures, the sea breeze, sea birds, and so on. The purity of the sea as stated in line 17 connects well with the metaphor of the sea as pure and original nature, as well as a primal purity. While the narrator had the sea sing a high song for him in the first stanza, a white sea-bird will sing a song to appease the ancestral spirits in this stanza. As an “*idlozi*” (ancestral spirit), the poet will hop about at the black bird like the mist. Linking up with ancestors again is the colour white, as the narrator wishes to be adorned with white. The poem has distinctive cultural associations. This stanza is reminiscence of the ‘*ukuvuma idlozi*’ practice; that is when a diviner ‘*isangoma*’ accepts the call of the ancestors to become a diviner. This activity is always done in a pool, where at the bottom of the pool the ancestors await, normally in the form of snakes. They ask the diviner, who is naked (just like the speaker) to smear himself with a white

clay (the black bird in line 22 becomes white in line 24). His sickness or sin is then left behind - it is a sort of a burial '*ukuguqula ubuntu*', it is the pool that changes the man. It is said that when a man comes out of the pool, it is known that he comes from the ancestors in that he comes out white (symbolizing a definite break with the old life and a start in the new). The colour white (in line 24) is also associated with the ancestors, as Berglund (1989: 371) claims: "shades, like the cattle of the underworld, are thought to be white ... No Zulu whose thinking on shades is representative doubts that they are white". One is also white at birth. One can also thus interpret the poem as such.

25. *Ngiyovakashelw' amahlengethw' ahlab' ujenga,*
26. *Emumeth' ulwandle nehlabathi lokukhafa,*
27. *Komoy' ababi kosithel' ujenga,*
28. *Kulaph' imikhumbi ngamacilong' iyokhala,*
29. *Ikhuz' amabhilid' umdak' ewuphanga,*
30. *Eqonel' elimadev' amhloph' ikhehla,*
31. *Elibuphuza ngemilom' eminingi lingabuthenganga,*
32. *Ungumbaz' umangumb' umankumbu wenkwathalala.*

- (25. The porpoise will pay me a visit,
26. Holding the sea and spitting out unclean things,
27. Bad spirit will disappear,
28. Where the ships with trumpets will be blown,
29. Will be swiftly blown,
30. Outwitting the white-moustached old man,
31. Drinking water from the rivers that pour into the sea,
32. Marvelling at the huge sea.)

In line 29, the word order is reversed, instead of "*ukuphanga umdaka*", the narrator uses "*umdak' ewuphanga*". This phrase is used in a proverb "*kuphangw' umdaka linile yini?*" (Has it rained that there should be such a hurry to plough?), and is used as a warning against hasty marriage (Nyembezi, 1954: 133-134). The verb "*-daka*" supports this interpretation because it not only means to intoxicate or to confuse, but also to be conceited.

33. *Sebehluthulel' inqaba ngesihluthelelo sasetilongweni,*
34. *Ngiyolunguza ngelilodw' embotshen' encane,*
35. *Ngibon' amaxhegu nezimomondiy' ogwini,*
36. *Abagqolozelw' ilang' elinomona lize lihline.*
37. *Ngibon' ezihlekayo nezithililekay' izithandani,*
38. *Ezihlabathini ngothando lwaseMpelamandla zingqayiselene,*
39. *Yile njabul' engifun' ukuyigomoshela ngeny' imini,*
40. *Nisize ningakhel' inqaba ngasolwandle.*

- (33. They have locked the fortress with prison lock,
34. I will peep in the small hole with one eye,
35. I see old men and beautiful girls on the beach,
36. Who are stared at by the jealous sun with a grin of pain,
37. I see lovers laughing and leisurely walking,
38. At the beach, lovers compete with one another
39. This type of happiness I will cherish one day,
40. Build me a fortress by the ocean.)

Whereas the poem begins with the fortress being a place of escape, of serenity and peace; the narrator now finds the fortress a prison from which he can only peep through with one eye. The same sense of a love-hate relationship in the noun “*inqaba*” is reverberated in the verb “*-inqaba*” which has the negative connotation of ‘forbid or refuse’, but also ‘to be fine, excellent’. A hidden warning is even perceptible in a related proverb: “*inqab' inqabel' umniniyo*” (the fort thwarts the owner). With this play of words, the rhetoric implies that one is hoist with one’s own petard. One affects oneself by one’s scheme against others.

The narrator feels confined as he can only glimpse at the world outside. Similarly to the jealous sun, he stares at the old men and pretty girls on the beach. The binary opposition of “young/old” again connects with life and death. One is born young and hopefully dies old. Yet the beach only has young girls and old men. This could perhaps be a projection of a fantasy the narrator may have, the lovers laughing and walking leisurely could be him, as an old man, with a younger girl. In line 38,



the compound noun “-phela” and “amandla” literally means to finish strength. This could be interpreted in many ways, as love-making (the lovers on the sandy soil struggling with each other), or it could also mean the end of one’s resources finally at death. One however gets the feeling that the narrator sees these acts of love, finds happiness in them, and as such, still wants to be buried at the sea-side.

### **2.3.2 The theme of education**

In this section, two poems will be discussed. In the poem “*EDlangezwa KwaNgqondonkulu*” (At Dlangezwa at the place of *Ngqondonkulu* (greatest mind)) (*Izinsungulo* 1980: 39), the theme regards the poet’s academic inspiration from high school onwards, and in “*Engikubona kwenzeka*” (My experiences of what I saw) (*Izinsungulo* 1980: 45), the theme concerns the poet’s life experiences as he witnesses changes in indigenous amaZulu culture.

In the poem “*EDlangezwa KwaNgqondonkulu*” the speaker demonstrates the transformative power of education. The poem avers that striving for learnedness strips you of ignorance. The speaker glorifies his old school, which he personifies as an eagle. The eagle is furthermore an emblem of the school, and this serves as inspiration to the narrator. When invoking the eagle as a muse, the speaker is professing a dependence on the favours of this inspiration for his compositions. This ought to be examined more carefully than is the practice by literary critics who frequently regard this invocation simply as a device. What the poet essentially does when he invokes the muse is to recognise that he is not the source of his poetry, paradoxical as this may appear. The speaker is seen as the subject of the poem, but in contrast to the traditional sense of subject which believes that the individual human being possesses valid self-knowledge and is self-actuating (in charge and control of him/herself), deconstruction views subject as secondary, constructed (by language, or ideology, for instance), volatile, standing in its own shadow, and self-divided (Hawthorn, 1992: 180-182). As subject of the poem, the

speaker does not have control over his utterances; they do not originate with him. His self-consciousness has already been transformed by language, ideology, etc. The subject is a rhetorical fiction, an illusion, a construction in language - the subject is constituted and controlled by language.

Complications one finds in life and learning are compared to the “*izingibe nezingoxingoxi zamathunzi*” (snares and large cleft of the shades) which trouble the eagle. In pursuit of good education, one may face challenges and have to endure suffering.

1. *Ukhoz’ oluzinze ezintabeni zasoNgoye,*
2. *UMaphikw’ azinkumbi ngokufukamel’ uNomfundo,*
3. *InamaZululwane engundab’ uzekwayo okukaNohoye,*
4. *KwaZulu baba yimvula yezinhlanhla zikaNomfundo.*

- (1. An eagle stationed at the mountain of Ngoye,
2. The place that houses education,
3. Indescribable place of learning,
4. At Zululand there are blessings and prosperity.)

According to Msimang:

*Lapha uMashimane utusa isikole afunda kuso umatikuletsheni esilaphaya ezintabeni zoNgoye lukaYeyeye. Ekutuseneni kwakhe usebenzise isingathekiso sokhozi kwaba yisona esiyithungayo futhi siyisongele nkondlo (Izimbongi Izolo Nanamuhla 1986: 199).*

(Here Mashimane praises the school he learned from and matriculated from, it is there on top of the mountain at Ngoye of Yeyeye. In his praises he uses the metaphor of an eagle which knit together and wrap up this poem).

As stated by Msimang, the school Dlangezwa is perched on top of the Ngoye Mountain, similar to an eagle crouching on a ledge. Line 2 employs the signifier ‘wings’ as protecting education. Education is here made female as the prefix No- is placed in front of the noun. In the amaZulu culture Nomhhoyi (Nohoye) is the god

of hard work. Nomhhoyi is frequently compared to Nomkhubulwane as their functions are very similar (Nyembezi & Nxumalo, 1966: 131). Nomkhubulwane is said to be the daughter of *UNkulunkulu* (the Great One). Krige (1988:197-198) explains Nomkhubulwane, her appearance on earth and her songs as follows:

When the valley mists of spring appear they are believed to enshroud Nomkhubulwane, the *Inkosazana yasezulwini* or the Princess of Heaven. She seems to be a kind of goddess of the corn, virtually a Zulu Ceres presiding over the growth of the grain ... It is she, too, who has the power of bringing rain ... Every year in or about the month of October, she is thought to visit the earth, and there are celebrations and a feast called uNomdede in honour of Nomkhubulwane. ... Girls sing songs in her honour. It is customary to make use of the opportunity to entreat the princess of Heaven to relieve the people of hardships or difficulties, such as drought. If there is drought, the fathers of the girls will instruct them to take their brothers' loin coverings, sticks and small shields and go out and herd the cattle on the morning of the feast.

In this regard, education is not only a soaring eagle, but also like the rain sent by Nomkhubulwane after a long drought.

5. *Khozi lwezimanga, khozi lwemihlola,*
6. *Baning' ubafukamela kowamaphik' umthunzi,*
7. *Ubafundis' ukundizel' emafini ngokuwela*
8. *Izingibe nezingoxingoxi zamathunzi.*

- (5. Eagle of unbelievable happenings, eagle of ill-omen,
6. You have given shelter to multitudes,
7. Teaching them to succeed and prosper
8. Despite some challenges.)

As can be seen in the above stanza, the poem depends throughout on a set of simple, clear-cut oppositions: up/down, knowledge/ignorance, humility/arrogance, ascend/descend, come/go, complete/incomplete, white/black, good/bad,

permanent/temporary, heaven/earth, light/dark, abundance/shortage, life/death, protect/neglect.

The terms 'knowledge' and 'ignorance' form a binary opposition: a pair of contrasted terms, each of which depends on the other for its meaning. All the above-mentioned oppositions are governed by the distinction, either/or. If this is acceptable, conceptual order which makes decision possible is established. Derrida, nevertheless, 'unfixes' these oppositions by offering a different way of thinking. He turns both terms of the polarity into undecidables. These undecidables constantly slip across each other's boundary resulting in a relation which is more than the opposition can allow. And because of that, they question the very principle of 'opposition'. Similarly to the undecidable of the concept *abaphansi*, the oppositions in the poem which ought to establish stable, clear and permanent categories start to unravel. The eagle which stands for knowledge and light also brings ill-omen and darkness - they incorporate both good and bad characteristics.

The image of the eagle teaching others to fly in line 7 presents a vision of an ideal world where death, miseries and ignorance are left behind, but there is also a firm sense of the gap between how things might be in a perfect world and how they are in the everyday world. The text is elaborately patterned to reinforce this sense of something ideal and remote from ordinary life, but there is a further complication in the presentational mode of the narrator, who hints at the perplexing nature of experience in line 5. Like the flying eagle, the narrator's mind or mental pressures and abilities must escape the pressures of daily difficulties and calamities. The eagle is the means by which his aspiration can be acquired - that of enlightenment; obtaining light. The eagle is in the ideal position of being a constituent of both earth and heaven, an intermediary between earth and sun, day and night, light and dark. Being oppositions, the one exists because of the other, but the bird symbolizes the point where they come together.

9. *BengoNozintab 'ubaqansis' izintaba zosizi,*
10. *Bazabalaz' oMzabalazi baqhubek' oNqubeko,*
11. *Wabazuzis' iminyezane yawesicong' amathabazi,*
12. *Wabapholis' imijuluko ngokuphola kwempucuko.*

- (9. Facing challenges, you have enabled them to go through sufferings,
10. While struggling they kept on and continued to seek progress,
11. You have made them to succeed and to realise their goals,
12. On obtaining education they became enlightened.)

In the word “qongo” the consonant “q” has been replaced by the “c” - “congo”; which a meaning of top, summit or apex. Here the poet has taken the word “isiqongo” and replaced it with a dialect form “isicongo”, referring to “ingcongco” also meaning summit, top or crown. The ideophone “cóngco” connects well again with the metaphor of the eagle as it has the meaning of perching (as a bird) or standing out prominently (as a successful person). According to Derrida, this alteration of “iterability” (Derrida 1988: 18) means that the insertion of consonant into new contexts continually produces new meanings which are both partly different from and partly similar to previous understandings.

In this particular stanza, learners are equated with mountains “Nozintaba” (meaning outstanding or gifted learners); “oMzabalazi” (hard-working learners or learners who persevere with the struggle), “oNqubeko” (successful learners). This type of student progresses well in life as education heals the hard laborious life.

13. *Soxakile, mzwilili wemizwilili,*
14. *Wen 'oxak, ogwababa ngobugwababa,*
15. *Bayaxakeka wen' ongadalelwanga buzwilili,*
16. *Wen' owadalelw' ukuxabalasa okwegwababa.*

- (13. Soxakile, canary of canaries,
14. You who confuse, crow of crows, (confusing those who don't like education)

15. They become confused who were never created for canary sweet sound (surpassing those who were not born to prosper),
16. You who were created to stand out like a crow (you were born not to be educated)).

The poet in this stanza mentions two types of contrasted birds “*umzwilili*” (canary) and “*ogwababa*” (crow). A canary produces a melodious sound while a crow produces a harsh squawk. This stanza could be interpreted that the school was doing well in choral music competition as compared to the past, or even that this school excelled in all areas better than other schools. As seen in the previous stanzas, the speaker has a special fondness for the mountains and he places the object of his tutelage on the mountains’ where the Cape canaries sing. This faunal importation seems purely descriptive, but enhances the metaphor to follow. Soxakile is described as “*mzwilili wemizwilili*” (canary of canaries), but also as “*ogwababa ngobugwababa*” (a crow). The contradiction is exemplified not only in colour yellow/black, light/dark, but also in sound: melodious /harsh. The bird imagery is thus extended from an eagle that flies and gives shelter with his wings, to a sweet-singing canary and a squawking crow.

There is a repetition of the word “-*xaka*” a canary is called “Soxakile”, an entangler, “*oxaka*” means it confuses, “*bayaxakeka*” they are put in a fix (iterability). The word “*xabalasa*” is unreadable because of difference of the consonant “s” but “*xabalaza*” which means stands space out, the trace is the consonant “z” which means the school was meant not to do well in choral music.

14. *Ngqondo emagatshagatsha okwesihlahla somkhamba,*
15. *Ngqondongqondo ebatshazwe ngabaninginingi,*
16. *Bakulubalubel’ ubunzul’ obudume umhlaba,*
17. *Nowazibopha ngexhama wabonakal’ umuvi.*

- (17. Your knowledge is cherished by many people,
18. Your knowledge is praised by many,

19. You are well known in the whole world,
20. In your every attempt you are able to succeed.)

Msimang exclaims that in this stanza the following is stated:

*Lokho kusho ukuthi leDlangezwa esezintabeni zaseNgoye, eduze neYunivesithi yakithi, icija abafundi emikhakheni eyahlukahlukene yolwazi* (Msimang 1986: 199)

(This states that there at Dlangezwa at the mountain of Ngoye, next to our University, which sharpens students' different faculties of knowledge).

The school and the University disseminate or disperse knowledge across the world. The poet has duplicated the stem "*Ngqondo*" in "*Ngqondongqondo*". It shows the high esteem the poet has for Dlangezwa by concluding remarks "*ubunzul' obudume umhlaba*" (the whirlpool which is well known in the whole world).

In line 20 a proverb is inserted. The proper syntax for the proverb is "*Uyadel' umuvi wona wazibopha ngexhama wabonakala* (Happy is the wasp which tied itself with a belt successfully), which is shortened to "*Nowazibopha ngexhama wabonakal' umuvi*". As Nyembezi (1954: 94) explains:

The part joining the thoracic region and the abdominal region of the wasp is very small. If wasps used belts before, then they used them successfully, because no one may make a mistake as to what part of the body is tied to. The belt may also refer to the yellow band round the body. A young man may say this to a girl he is wooing, bemoaning the fact that he is not able to show her his real feelings so that she may appreciate his sincerity and accept him. The expression means that he is a happy person who, when attempting to do a thing, succeeds.

The poet concludes by saying in line 21 that he would like to borrow the eagle's wings to show off to the small white nations:

21. *Mndizisikazi ngebolek' izimpaphe zakho,*
22. *Ze ngizigqaje ngazo kuzizwana zakoJantoni,*
23. *Mkhanyiseli nobhaqa lwenhliziyo yami,*
24. *Ngqondonkulu sinkwa somoya nenhliziyo yami!*

- (21. Education lend me your wings,
22. So that I may be able to show off to those who looked down upon us,
23. Illuminator and light of my heart,
24. Education, spiritual food, together with my heart!)

If one interprets the stanza literally, it states that the education from Dlangezwa High School is like “*ubhaqa*” (grass used by the amaZulu for giving light) and “*isinkwa*” (bread), both symbols are representative of life, light and empowerment. However as explained above, the act of flying indicates a search for inspiration, and to be free of worldly miseries. The repetition of the word ‘heart’ is emphatic as the seat of emotion such as inspiration. This speaker of the poem is thus on a quest - he/she is on a symbolic journey in order to gain intellectual, moral or spiritual qualities, which will be acknowledged by all, but especially the small nations of the whites.

Maphumulo relates in the poem “*Engikubone kwenzeka*” [Izinsungulo, 1980: 45] how life changes and how amaZulu culture is influenced by Western culture:

1. *Ngizalwe ngaba isithohlongwana esincane,*
2. *Umhlaba ngiwubona kalufifi umncane.*
3. *Ingqondo ibimbozwe imvakazi yokungazi,*
4. *Nezenzo zisithul' ifu lokungazi.*

- (1. I was born and became a small boy,
2. I distinctly saw the world as very small,
3. I was inexperienced and ignorant,
4. Actions were clouded by ignorance.)



The recurrence of “*mncane*” refers to the youngster who experience limited vision because small children are still innocent and inexperienced with little understanding of worldly matters. There is another recurrence of the word “*ukungazi*” in line 4 which reiterates the dearth of knowledge or experience. This line may mean taking a wrong decision which leads to erroneous actions. The repetition of “*ukungazi*” as well as “*imvakazi*” and “*ifu*” reiterates the fact that the speaker wants to cut through the veils and the clouds in order to see more clearly. This follows the deconstruction’s conviction that naive ignorance needs to be eliminated. A similar trope is that of “*izinkungu*” which means mists as well as ignorance.

5. *Kubhej’ ezansi amehl’ avuleka,*
6. *Ebuthongweni bokungazi yebo ngavuka.*
7. *Obabamkhulu babehlez’ ezindlin’ oguqasithandaze*
8. *Obaba bahlala kwimiphumela yokuthandaza.*

- (5. Things became clearer and I became wise,
6. In my sleep and ignorance, I became wise.
7. Our grandfathers lived in small traditional houses,
8. Our forefathers survived by begging from others.

This stanza presents the epiphany where the narrator’s eyes were opened to new experiences, he awoke from sleep. However, the manifestation is one of loss – whereas his forefathers traditionally dwelled in the small huts, his father, as a result of the acquisition of Christian faith, knelt in prayer. Culture is a ‘trace’- something that structurally signals at the absence of its ‘source’ but to a particular absence, not absence in general (Derrida, 1968: 427). ‘Our fathers dwell as the result of prayer’ is the influence of the Christian culture on the amaZulu culture.

9. *Obabamkhulu eyab’ ingqephu kwakuyisikhumba,*
10. *Behubhazela beyikazela bengoNozikhumba.*
11. *Ubuthutha buphenduk’ ubuhlakaniphi ngengubo,*
12. *Izizwe zabeth’ isibongo sakwaNgubo.*

- (9. Our grandfathers' clothes were from animals skins,
10. They put on swinging animal skins as their garments,
11. The foolishness of wearing animal skins turned into fashionable clothes,
12. Nations gave them a new surname called Ngubo (clothes.)

Similarly, traditional dress worn by the narrator's forefathers consisted of animal skin. The indigenous cultural dresses used in the past by women were known as "*isidwaba*". The amaZulu men's cultural dress was "*ibheshu*". Contact with Western civilisation has changed this type of clothing. The trend nowadays is to wear western clothing, especially brand names. The indigenous or traditional dresses are looked down upon nowadays, and only those who put on modern dresses are accepted as smart and trendy. Old traditional wear is now despised.

13. *Ngibabone bebhadula izinyawo zangangezintaba,*
14. *Namhlanje ngezimoto bathambekel' izintaba.*
15. *Ngibelamele behuq' igudu okukaPhosphozwayo,*
16. *Namhlanje bashay' inteth' okukaKhuzwayo.*

- (13. I have seen them trampling with their feet,
14. Today, they are travelling with their cars,
15. I saw them smoking horn pipe,
16. Today they smoke cigarettes.)

The narrator here again contrasts the traditional or indigenous life to the modern lifestyle. The phrase "*bhadula ngezinyawo*" in line 13 is juxtaposed with line 14 "*thambekela ngezimoto*", walking versus driving. In line 15 "*-huq igudu*" (smoke hornpipe for smoking hemp or dagga) is further contrasted with "*shay' intethe*" (smoking cigarette) in line 16. There are binary oppositions: feet/cars, horn pipe/cigarette and indigenous/modern.

17. *Nguquko yempilo masidl' ingevu,*
18. *Sithamund' ezindala kuvuk' amangwevu.*
19. *Basihlekisa ngamazinyo besibhinqa ngezinhliziyo,*
20. *Njengezinja sigol' izinambuzane ngezinhliziyo.*

- (17. The wheel of change led to interaction between people,
18. Let's come together and debate issues,
19. They pretend while they are sarcastic in their hearts,
20. Like dogs, our hearts become hurt.)

The poet is critical about modern civilization and the changes it has brought about in amaZulu culture. It is submitted that there should be discussion about it "in order to be able to trace out of nature, direction and causes of the changes that have taken place" (Derrida, 1997: 31). The present lifestyle is criticized as the "intrusion of Western civilization" (Derrida, 1997: 32). The smile in line 19 "with the teeth" may be interpreted as false or deceitful, supporting the image of the sarcastic heart. The image of a dog catching the small, slow-moving animals seems to be unfulfilled desire or unachievable aspirations.

21. *Ngikubonile Zulu uyisiceb' okweNkosi,*
22. *Usho ngomphandakazi womkhab' okukaNkosi.*
23. *Namhlanje Zulu uzinqe zisobala,*
24. *Uphang' ubuze uhlel' obala.*

- (21. I once saw you amaZulu people being rich like a king,
22. You had a big belly like a king,
23. Today amaZulu people are poor,
24. You have been exposed for doing nothing.)

The traditional elements in this poem again focus on a wish the speaker has; that is, not to lose your culture in a fast-westernizing world. There is a conflict about the cultural change expressed by Maphumulo in this poem. The present-day change must be understood as the imposition of a so-called 'higher' (or aggressive) culture on a 'lower' (or vulnerable) culture. From religion, clothing, and basic necessities, it is the aggressive European culture who feels responsible for the weal and woe of the 'lower' culture and their human bearers. By making this their responsibility or concern, the amaZulu culture is usurped and destroyed. This

contradiction is further made visual in the metaphor of a 'protruding stomach' and 'exposed buttocks'. While in the amaZulu culture protruding stomachs are characteristics of a prosperous person "*umnumzane*", the exposed buttocks refer to a greedy or impoverished lifestyle.

- 25. *Bakubukele phansi okwamafinyila Zulu,*
- 26. *Namhlanje bakubukela phezul' okweZulu.*
- 27. *Mdali ezinzulwini zolwandle sitakule,*
- 28. *Sibek' emkhathini wezinkanyezi njengomtakuli.*

- (25. They look down upon amaZulu people,
- 26. Today they respect you.
- 27. Creator, please save us
- 28. Elevate us our saviour.)

The poet points out the perception people had of the primitive amaZulu, as stated in line 25, 'they look down upon the AmaZulu like mucus from the nose'. However, today 'they look up like the sky or heaven' (line 26). The binaries created here are up/down, heaven/snot. The word amaZulu links at the end of lines 25 and 26, however one word means the Zulu race, while the other means the heaven or the sky. Line 27 refers to the creator who redeemed the people from the deep sea. Stars are used in line 28 are similarly utilised in the Bible in the figurative sense to represent people. The resurrected and exalted Jesus spoke of himself as "the bright morning star". The poem concludes with being lifted to the stars which may mean to glorify. This poem shows similarities to the biblical section of 1 Corinthians 13, verses 11 and 12: "When I was a babe, I used to speak as a babe, to think as a babe, to reason as a babe; but now that I have become a man, I have done away with the [traits] of a babe. For at present we see in hazy outline by means of mental mirror, but then it will be face to face. At present I know partially, but then I shall know accurately even as I am accurately known". Christian faith agrees that one cannot grasp the truth of things as they presently are apart from what they are destined to be. The stages of the poet's cultural journey ultimately end with the

creator who should make him to illuminate or redeem the cultural amaZulu race like the stars.

## 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on deconstructing themes in Maphumulo's poetry. The themes that were selected to be deconstructed included that of death and education. Both the poems "*KwaMaphumulo zaphuma esibayeni*" (They were left without any cattle at Maphumulo's kraal) (Izinsungulo 1980: 40) and "*Ningakhele Inqaba Ngasolwandle*" (Built me a fortress next to the ocean) (Izigi Zembongi, 2004: 12) present their contents well for deconstructive reading. The first poem concerns the mourning of the death of the narrator's sister Fakazile. This eulogy exhibited elements of cultural matters such as the loss of bridal cattle, and the age "*intombi*" of the deceased. The concepts of the Zulu culture, incorporated as materials in the language and in this poem, contain both logocentric metaphysics and its displacement. This subversion is forged into the conceptual words, the figures, and the culture.

In the poem "*Ningakhele Inqaba Ngasolwandle*", the narrator takes a spiritual journey as he expresses his wish to be buried next to the sea. This poem also exemplifies the amaZulu belief of life after death, here in the form of dwarfs. The narrator's love of nature, the sea, sandy soil of the beach, sea shells, sea white birds, and tortoises co-exist with the amaZulu culture. Reference is further made to the amaZulu king Shaka. This poem illustrates binary oppositions well as the undecidables of nature/culture, living/non-living and conscious/unconscious were deconstructed. Undecidables disrupt oppositional logic. The poet is an ancestral spirit and exists in the spiritual realm/world near the sea. The narrator seems to accept both amaZulu culture and the Western culture (French fortress), however he feels at times trapped in his fortress, which may be an allusion to the restraints of Western culture. Still, admiring the old men, young girls, and lovers on the

beach, a sense of essential brotherhood of the great of the great human family - the unity of humankind – is experienced. Although the poem is about death, one feels a feeling of love which is not confined to a few, but extends, like the light and warmth of the sun, to all.

In the poems concerning the theme of education, one is tempted to state that these poems represent reality. However, deconstructionists are against the view which depicts the text as a representation of reality. On the contrary, so they say, the text is actually creating a reality. The realistic impression of true presence is precisely the result of the language's ability to, what is absent in facts, recall as reality. The language creates reality. The first poem, "*EDlangezwa KwaNgqondonkulu*" (At Dlangezwa at the place of *Ngqondonkulu* (greatest minds)) (*Izinsungulo* 1980: 39) regards the poet's academic inspiration from high school onwards.

The title of the second poem "*Engikubona kwenzeka*" (My experiences of what I saw) (*Izinsungulo* 1980: 45) supposedly gives a personal view of the narrator's life experiences. However, one finds after reading the poem that it is more a critique on the influence of Western civilisation on amaZulu culture. In this poem, Maphumulo emphasizes the element of cultural confusion moreover by employing unique Zulu socio-cultural images which are localised to time and space. These images reveal cultural traits with a specific context and specific culture-orientated attitudes to given phenomena. One can see that the amaZulu culture had a profound influence on the narrator as he grew up, and gained knowledge and experience. He mourns the loss of culture amongst the amaZulu people.

In the next chapter, meaning in Maphumulo's poetry will be deconstructed.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DECONSTRUCTING MEANING IN MAPHUMULO'S POETRY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Deconstruction questions structuralism's assumption that structures of meaning corresponds to some deep-laid mental set which determine the limits of intelligibility. It shows how this structure is subverted by the working of the texts themselves, and asserts that behind the structure of the text the structurality of language is at work. Deconstructionists show that language is not co-extensive with meaning, and rhetorical reading becomes in part an exposure of the ideological imposition of meaning on texts. It further sees language as a system of signs which are in constant play, and meaning is a product of this play of differentiation. However, this view does not entail that everything goes with regard to the interpretation of texts, but signifies that one is sensitive to the presence of phrases of countless other words and other texts, which are absent. A text is further seen as an intertextual event itself and changes continually for the interrelationship between signs is never constant. Instead of producing a univocal meaning, the text at every stage exhibits infinite polysemy.

In this chapter an endeavour will be made to give an informed commentary on the occurrence of rhetoricity in a selection of Maphumulo's poems. By rhetoric, deconstructionists do not mean the common definition of the term; that is, the skilful use of words to persuade, but rather an allusion to words' figural capacity. De Man (1979a:8) defines figurality as words' ability to refer to different meanings at once, each meaning being an 'error' in relation to the others. De Man explains that it is because language is thoroughly rhetorical that it generates multiple,

contradictory meanings: "Rhetoric opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration" (1979:10).

The poem to be deconstructed, namely, "*Indwamba*" (curdled milk) (*Izinsungulo* 1980: 37) conceals hidden meanings: "*Nxa uqala ukuyifunda uthola umqondo wokuthi izikhulumela ngendwamba nje – amasi uqobo lwawo*" translated as "the first impression you get after you have read it is about "*indwamba*"- the real curdled milk" (Msimang, 1986b: 138). Already it has a plural meaning, and its meaning is only found in its plurality. Maphumulo's poetry has however never been subjected to a deconstructive analysis which will unlock more concealed or hidden meanings. A short clarification of the deconstructive strategies or concepts will be given. The notions to be explored at this stage thus includes the text as a play of resemblance and différance (in other words, the rhetorical status of the text) as well as the questionable autonomy of the self, and writing as transgression. The above terminology requires explanation and ramification, which will be offered in due course with the aid of the following of Maphumulo's poem.

### **3.2 Meaning in deconstruction**

Derrida's approach to unveiling the layers of infinite meaning is to look for "the moment that is undecidable in terms of the text's apparent system of meaning, the moment in the text that seems to transgress its own system of laws" (1976: xiix). This, one is further told, is the moment "that its [the text's] 'origin' and its 'end' are given over to language in general ... the moment in the text which harbours the unbalancing of the equation, the sleight of hand at the limit of the text which cannot be dismissed simply as a contradiction" (1976: xiix) and finally, it is "the moment of the forgetting of the trace" (1976: ix). Having detected the fissure in the apparent closure of the text - the irretrievable and permanent cleavage between sign and meaning - the deconstructor reveals the chain of substitutions that characterizes the text and links it to all other texts.



The literary text can therefore be regarded as constituted by an indeterminate and paradoxical play of resemblance and difference, sameness and otherness. The mask of an original and self-identical meaning - the sign - slips and reveals an infinite regression of origin and a plurality of meanings.

Maphumulo's poetry has concealed or hidden meanings and by using the close deconstructive reading, possibilities of more meanings are unveiled. There are many problems with regard to the meaning and Derrida acknowledges that when one looks up for the word in a dictionary, it's explained by other words, which in themselves are explained by other words, and so on. Meaning can be structured against that which is before it, which is structured against that which is before that. De Saussure's linguistic signs are a signifier, a sensory perception, and a signified, a concept or meaning associated with sensory perception. But Derrida says that the object, the meaning, the origin, the signified, is unstable. In literature we often find pairs or opposition; they are usually hierarchies – one is dominant and other inferior. For example: good/ bad, light/dark. We can only define "good" by saying that it is not "bad". There is a constant deferral of meaning. Since the privileged term cannot come into being without the other, the boundary that creates the hierarchy dissolves. Our confidence in the superiority or dominance of "good" is destabilized, for to have good there must be bad. This idea is one of the central concepts of deconstruction, and the key to deconstructing a text. Nietzsche gives a good example: when feeling a pain, we look for cause. We might look down and identify a wasp or a red ant as the cause of the pain. A deconstructive analysis would say that if it weren't for the pain there would be no cause – it's the experience of pain that causes us to search for the offending insect. If either cause or effect can occupy the position of origin, then the idea of an origin loses its meaning. Again, the hierarchy dissolves.

Lacoue-Labarthe (1993: 148), a follower of Derrida, says that poetry is the “actual speaking, i.e. audible words which, in respect, temporal duration as well as their real sound, must be moulded by the poet, and this necessitates tempo, rhythm, euphony, rhyme, and so forth.” It is no less true that “there are only signs of ideas and therefore the real origin of poetic lies neither in the choice of single words and the manner of their collocation into sentences and elaborate paragraphs, nor in euphony, rhythm, rhyme, etc. but in the kind of representation” (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1993: 148).

This is in accordance with Msimang’s viewpoint that Maphumulo’s poems are not representative of real life and yet has a meaning. It therefore, becomes important to describe what is analysed before one can elaborate on the multiplicity of the meaning as an aspect of deconstruction.

Meaning is acquired through words or pictures, and also expressed by means of using words. It is also seen as a dual product, as an author or poet and a reader’s product, since it consists of both the poet’s intention and the reader’s perception. The meaning is in most cases, according to Hawthorn (1992: 100) associated with significance. In his definition of meaning, Hawthorn agrees with Lacoue-Labarthe that “poetry is a kind of representation” (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1993: 112).

Meaning and significance are described in ways that are complementary. Meaning is, according to the above statement, acquired through words, through a particular way of using words, while significance is seen as a by-product of meaning. The presence of a word or picture is equivalent to the presence of a meaning. One cannot have meaning without words or pictures or symbols. Words or pictures create meaning.

The deconstruction believe that a text is a book with no meaning of its own unless someone reads it and assigns meaning to it. The interpreter attaches the meaning,

by reading and interpreting the text, hence Ellis states: “The author or poet does not create the meaning of their texts by composing them, but instead readers do by reading them” (Ellis, 1989: 139).

Consequently, when one wants to explore the meaning in a text, one needs to investigate the meaning of the text as found by the readers of the text. A readily available meaning of a text does not exist at all. Bloom (1979: 1) investigated the origin of the word ‘meaning’ and pronounces the following:

The word [meaning] goes back to a root that signifies ‘opinion’ or ‘intention’ and closely related to the word meaning. A poem’s meaning is a poem’s complaint.’

A poem utters a specific complaint and this complaint forms the gist of the whole poem. Bloom (1991: 32) explicitly states that a poem delivers ideas, and his statements link well with Hirsch’s definition of meaning because it also touches on the intention and the objective which can either be the poet’s or the reader’s intention. Hirsch (1991: 76) defines verbal meaning as “the shareable content of the speaker’s intentional object”. A reader of a text grasps the meaning of a text when he or she experiences sameness of content (or object) despite differentness of context. The text can therefore never simply be ‘what the text means to me’, as valid interpretation is always a public affair.

Meaning is a naturally a very important element in poetry. It cannot be done away with so easily. Deconstruction as a theory holds that no single correct interpretation of a poem or a text is possible. We shall first look at what is meant by the multiplicity of meaning and this will be followed by the practical application of multiplicity of meaning in a poem or poetry.

### **3.2.1 Multiplicity of meaning – implications**

The concept of multiplicity of meaning takes as its point of departure the idea that deconstruction like several other modern critical schools, attacks the premise that there is one stable objective text or reality which a knowing subject. An interpreter of a text is thus obligated to represent the meaning and its multiplicity as accurately as possible. In this regard, Butler adds:

The interpretation of a text typically goes beyond what it seems to say and brings out in various ways its implications (1984: 1).

Accordingly, texts will have a range of implications which the interpreter may have to specify. Some of these implications may be logically derived at in the sense that anyone who had a mature command of the language would come to a similar conclusion and would accept these implications.

Ray (1984: 9) believes that the identity of the work as both the reader's meaning and the poet's meaning functions equally as a provocative theoretical paradox and as the basis of an interpretative methodology. This merely means that readers should not only look for what they want from a text, but must also be aware of the writer's interpretation. Readers, as it has been stated earlier on, are given the freedom to read texts without constraints and therefore texts can have infinity of meanings. By doing so, a text is therefore liberated from its author to mean whatever it is taken to mean. Yet, although a text is given meaning by its author as well as its readers, one has to take note that although "authors make meaning, though not of course untrue, is merely a special case of the more universal truth that readers make meaning ... a poem really means whatever any reader seriously believes it to mean ... the number of possible meanings of a poem is itself infinite" (Ellis 1989: 117).

The notion that a text must be liberated from its author should be clearly understood. Ellis regards this process as including two steps. There is, first of all, liberation from the author, and secondly, there is liberation from the rules and conventions of the language in which the text is written. In effect, the argument operates with just two alternatives; either a text means what its author meant – or what the reader has perceived with the aid of free play of signs (Ellis 1989: 117). To compliment Ellis' viewpoint, Bloom (1979: 7) purports:

Freedom in a poem must mean freedom of meaning, the freedom to have meaning of one's own ... words will not interpret themselves, and common rules for interpreting words will never exist.

Bloom's statement suggests that readers can never interpret texts the same way, as there are no rules laid down for interpreting words when interpreting literature. Words will not interpret themselves. It is the readers who are instrumental in interpreting the words in texts, and they can never interpret words or texts alike, because there are no rules that they must follow when they interpret texts. As such, many meanings or readings may come to light. Readers are instrumental in producing texts' meanings, and they are also instrumental in discovering the texts' plurality of meanings. Sometimes readers even create meanings of a text. The reader's response to a text is naturally important to interpretation; however, deconstruction maintains that although the freedom of the reader's mental processes is acknowledged, the emphasis in interpretation must be more on the free play of signs.

Ellis (1989: 144) provides readers with guidelines to be followed when interpreting a poem. He suggests that:

...the first step is to focus on the most literal surface-meaning of a text, and thus avoiding any attention to subtleties it may contain. The next step is to demonstrate that there is a second layer of meaning, an ironic layer, or one

indicated in imagery and metaphor rather than in the literal meaning. And in the final step the familiarity of this procedure - it has, after all, been part of the stock-in-trade of critics for a very long time - is disguised by exotic new terminology: what we have done is not simply to look carefully at the different layers of textual meaning - we have 'deconstructed' it, 'demythologized' it.

As stated above, besides the revelation of the surface meaning and the figurative meaning, there are many underlying meanings a reader can detect in a text or a poem. Nietzsche (as quoted in Miller, 1972: 12), in his assertion about the correctness in interpretation says:

...the same text authorizes innumerable interpretations. There is no correct interpretation ... Ultimately; one finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported into them ... In fact, interpretation in itself a means of becoming master of something.

Miller summarizes Nietzsche's views by stating that "reading is never the objective identifying of a sense but the importation of meaning into a text which has no meaning 'in itself'" (1972: 12). Nietzsche's views on interpretation are relevant to the deconstructive theorist Jacques Derrida, who insists on the radical indeterminacy of the linguistic sign, which goes along with the unlimited plurality of meaning in a text.

It therefore goes without doubt that the immediate grasp of a poem may come later rather than early. It might come on the fifth or sixth reading rather than on the first reading. During the interpretative process, the reader may be able to look forward as well as backward as he moves through the poem. Consequently, the aim is to examine the manifestation of meaning in Maphumulo's poetry.

### 3.3 Multiplicity of meaning in Maphumulo's poetry

Under this sub-heading the researcher looks at the possible number of interpretations a reader can identify in Maphumulo's poem. It is a known fact that a poet chooses words for their suggestive power, as well as their meaning so as to express what he wants to impart to his readers. This implies that critics or readers should look for what is 'there' in the poem, 'there' in a sense that it can be described and referred to as unarguably given by the words. Sayce (as quoted in Nowotny 1996: 1) says the following:

The critic's first and most important task must be to discover, as far as he is able, the objective characteristics of the work under consideration. Even if he does no more than this he will have put the reader in a position to see for himself the merits and demerits of the work.

In analysing Maphumulo's "*Indwamba*" (*Izinsungulo*, 1980: 37), its objective characteristics will be uncovered and vigilantly deconstructed to show the consistent play of meaning in the poem. After a careful study of the above-mentioned poem, one may arrive at about seven or more interpretations. These interpretations will be utilized in order to illustrate the multiplicity of the meaning in this poem.

#### *Indwamba*

1. *Ngiyayimaya, ngiyayinwampela le ndwamba,*
2. *Idliwa layo ligcwalisa inkomazi emhlophe.*
3. *Ngike ngiqunge ihongo silibibiyelele.*
4. *Nami ngifuna ukuba danda liyisibhembe;*
5. *Abanjani kanti abathi ndiphu! Bathi memfu!*
6. *Mina ngaphuziswa okuphuma ngombhotshozelwa?*
  
7. *"Mfana wami yizingqwel' ezelusa le nsengwakazi*
8. *Ezinokuqheqhebula izangqondo zikanondlini."*
9. *Ingengelezi engwevu yangithamundela yayingungumbane,*
10. *Yaxing' ubal' okwensizwa ikhiwe yintombi;*
11. *Ngalahlekelwa yizinwele ngiphophothw' ikhanda,*
12. *'Ze nami nginwampele lezi zaqheqhe.*

13. *Ngingenzenjani ukuze nami ngizifikisele*
14. *Kulezi zaqheqhe abazidla imilom' inamfuk' amafutha?*
15. *Ngabuza sengimphefumulo uxabane nenhliziyo;*
16. *"Mfana thath' izinduku weluse le nsengwakazi,*
17. *Uvumele ukuphophothw' ikhanda kunzima,*
18. *Izingqwele zikugxabhis' umlaza unganaki.*
  
19. *Kuzofik' isigaba sokuba zikuphuzise ihongo,*
20. *Bekezela kunjalo uze uphuziswe ubisi,*
21. *Makhathaleni ziyokuhlehlezela izangqondo."*
22. *Ngathula ngizwa la mazwi edlala nengqondo,*
23. *Ngizwa umlomo osesibayeni uvumbulul' izimfihlo,*
24. *Ngalibuka nekhandela eliyisibindi limumeth' ingqondo.*
  
25. *Sengibonile, le ndwamba ingumnwebo, ilibangana.*
26. *Kufanele unyathele emeveni uyokweqela le nkomazi,*
27. *Uthi uyayisenga ikungqafaze, ngengelezi!*
28. *Ukhothamel' izingqwele zikuphophotha.*
29. *Wosh! Niqambe nishilo, ngimfunge angizuduba.*
  
- (1. Education is like curdled milk,
2. And is found at an institution.
3. With education I gather knowledge.
4. I hunger for more knowledge;
5. What type of people who succeed and become prominent!
6. While I've been given inferior education.
  
7. "Education is found from the brave and hardworking people
8. The determination of the brave drives them to acquire deep knowledge."
  
9. An old experienced man told me stories of his successes,
10. He showed his lack of knowledge;
11. "I worked hard and struggled a lot,
12. In order to attain this success and prosperity."
  
13. What can I do to attain
14. This education that gratifies.
15. I enquire with mixed;



16. "Young man, take up your books and go to school,
17. And allow to be subjected to challenges,
18. Ignore those who have succeeded when they ill-treat you.
  
19. A time will come where you will be regarded as a novice,
20. Nonetheless, be patient till you move to a medium level,
21. At the end, you will reach greater heights"
22. I was quiet when I heard these words as they played in my head,
23. I hear the voice revealing secrets from the kraal.
24. I looked at the bold man filled with wisdom.
  
25. I have seen that education is a long journey,
26. You must tread on thorns and pursue education,
27. When trying to make an effort, you fail!
28. Then you will succumb to the brave ones to strike you on the head.
29. Oh my goodness! It won't happen; I won't surrender.)

The first interpretation at face value concerns the beauty of culture. "*Indwamba*" is the curdled milk which is the precious food in the Zulu culture. According to the amaZulu culture, at the age of six a boy begins to herd his father's cattle. A good herder made his father feel that his son could carry on ably after he died (Bleeker & Sasaki, 1970: 39). It becomes clear that the poet has an experience with herding cattle or livestock and knows how to milk cows. Maphumulo draws his lexical set for example "*ihongo*" (curds), "*izangqondo*" (good, thick sour milk), "*izaqheqhe*" (rich creamy milk) and "*umlaza*" (whey of sour milk) directly from deep amaZulu culture. Maphumulo relates his broad and rich background on isiZulu culture as a way of life. Although it is a strenuous work, nothing can prevent the poet from herding the cattle.

Lines 26- 29 illustrate the fact that Maphumulo is in love with his culture to such an extent that he may suffer for it. AmaZulu children grew up to respect the community and to feel responsible for accomplishing the tasks given to them. A young herder carefully tended to the sheep and goats, the cows, bulls, and oxen entrusted to him. He would risk his life to save a cow or a goat. Young boys did not

carry spears, called assegais, but they were always armed with a stick and accompanied by a faithful dog or two (Bleeker & Sasaki, 1970: 44).

The second interpretation may be that of a life lesson with the narrator representing a strict schoolteacher. The speaker is not supposed to urge the reader to eat creamy milk and herd livestock, but this is how he was taught. The man or educator's characteristics are described in lines 9-10 as being bald-headed and grey, and in line 24 as intelligent, experienced and very proud.

The teacher is very proud of his culture and the knowledge one can gain from it as his utterances indicate: "*Mfana wami yizingqwel' ezelusa le nsengwakazi*" ("My boy it is the brave ones who herds this cow". The speaker further continues to ask the teacher how to eat this creamy milk. The teacher boastfully tells the poet to take the stick and herd this milky cow which is a dangerous job, but at the end the speaker swears not to give up. The speaker states that not only will he continue the tradition in the future, but he will even do better than the teacher. When the word "*ingqwele*" (the hero or the brave one) is further investigated as to multiplicity of meaning, it also denotes a boy who defeats other boys of his age group; a champion. This fits in well with the last interpretation.

The third interpretation continues by extending the last reading – that of hero or champion. In line 7, the words "*yizingqwel' ezelusa lensengwakazi*" may be translated as 'the brave one who herds this milking cow'. Line 26 further reiterates braveness as it is stated "*Kufanele unyathele emeveni uyokwegela le Nkomazi*" (You must tread on the thorns and head off this female cow). Line 28 refers to the tradition of ... "*Ukhothamel' izingqwele zikuphophotha.*" This sentence has connotations with the hero and warrior, King Shaka. At the age of eleven he fought two herd boys who tried to chase his cattle from a grazing spot he had chosen. Shaka gave each boy a severe beating. At the age of thirteen, a black mamba snake attacked and would have killed his mother's father's prize bull. With his club

Shaka struck out and killed the snake. The clan chief praised his courage before the entire assembly. The chief ordered a goat to be killed in Shaka's honour (Bleeker & Sasaki, 1970: 106). According to Msimang (1986b:138) "*Sesingacabanga ngazo zonke izinto ezitholakala kanzima*", translated as 'We may think of all sorts of things we get after a struggle.' You may be a hero in sport, music and in dancing. This section also hints to the school surroundings, the bad experience of corporal punishment and many years of learning under the experienced and knowledgeable adults/teachers, etcetera. This is used to make children to be better people and citizens – as the saying goes: 'no pain, no gain'. For one to be a hero or heroine one has to pass some life tests and endure disappointments. It is not easy to be educated, you need to work harder and those heroes, the experienced people or experienced teachers who impart knowledge, are to guide you.

The fourth interpretation concerns education. According to C.S.Z. Ntuli in *Izizenze* (1986:118):

*Wubani pho ongaphika ukuthi imfundiso yokhamba lwamasi iyaludla ubhedu? Iqiniso elimsulwa lithi luyawina ukhamba lwamasi uma kukhulunywa ngamasu akhaliphile okuthandanisa abantu nokuqeda ubugovu.*

(Who then can refuse that the education of the earthenware sour-milk pot is successful? The honest truth says the earthen sour-milk pot wins if one talks of the clever plan of making people to like one another and to get rid of selfishness.)

Ntuli is referring to the primary education the child is taught by the parents. In the Bible this lesson is about love:

*Laphaya emapulupitini abafundisi sebaze basha amazwi bememezela iVangeli lothando; Wothanda umakhelwane wakho njengoba uzithanda wena.*

(There at the pulpit the priest they had become dry by shouting the Gospel of love. Love your neighbour as you love yourself.)

According to Hebrews 5 verse 12:

Although you ought to be teachers in view of the time, you need someone to teach you from the beginning the elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God; and you have become as needing milk, not solid food.

The type of education is elementary education which is similar to the one the poet required for his growth. In lines 13-14 the poet wants to know what he must do to eat the creamy milk. The poet swears that he will persist in order to achieve this.

*“Ngimfunge angizuduba”* (I swear I will persist).

*Yaxing’ ubala okwenisizwa ikhiwe yintombi ...  
Ngizwa umlomo wezinsizwa uvumbulula izimfihlo,  
Ngalibuka nekhanda eliyisibindi limumethe ingqondo.*

(The experienced teacher told me, and with pride he looked at me like a busy teacher telling with his stick slashing in the air.) ...

I hear the mouth of the young men approaching manhood uncovering secrets.

I look at the head like liver filled with intelligence.)

The teacher is elderly, the *“ikhanda eliyisibindi”* (head like liver) indicates that this person has many years of experience. The head is probably the colour of liver and also hairless because of old age. The teacher is very proud in his utterances *“Mfana wam’ izingqwel’ ezelusa le nsengwakazi”* and the poet continues to ask the teacher how to eat this creamy milk. Then the teacher boastfully tells the poet to take the stick and herd this milky cow which was dangerous but at the end the poet swears not to give up. The poet says that he will do that in future, better than his teacher.

The fifth interpretation concerns nutritious food. Milk is the mainstay of the amaZulu's diet. However, although all food is shared in the amaZulu community, *amasi* may only be consumed by family members. At the chief's place, all may partake of *amasi* as he is the father of the clan. The poet mentions various types of milk. What came out from the hole of a calabash is "*umlaza*", milky water which is equal to buttermilk.

*Noma ngingabizwa ngemfezi...  
Ukuduma ngokuthi ngedlula abanye ngokuthanda ukudla  
Okuphelele, okuligugu kwabaphezulu – amasi*

(Even if I am called spitting cobra...  
And to be well known by eating nutritious food than others,  
Food that is precious to the ancestors and divine creatures in heaven - sour milk)

Msimang reaches the same conclusion that the sour milk to a Zulu person is nutritious food. Ntuli (1982: 20) further explains the word "*izimfezi*" as follows:

*Izimfezi zangempela iphela ezilikhetha emasini zilintshinga... Kungasekho ngisho namancane amasi abonakala emhloshana emzimbeni walo.*  
(The 'spitting cobras' pick out the cockroach from the sour milk, they completely separate the cockroach from the sour milk and throw it away without any trace of white colour left on its body.)

The above explanation contains a proverb used to explain a person/animal who discriminates against another.

Milk is also a symbol of protection and fertility. The first stanza is about enjoying sour milk and also in the second, the experienced, old teacher warns the poet of the difficulties or challenges he will encounter in life. Milk is there to protect the boy until he becomes a man. The protective quality of milk is already seen at birth when the mother squirts a ring of breast milk around the sleeping child in order to protect him (Berglund, 1989: 339-340). Milk is as such resisting evil or harm.

In the verse “*Okuphelele, okuligugu kwabaphezulu – amasi*”, the poet exemplifies the fact that the ancestors also find sour milk as nutritious. Ancestors receive milk in many ways: one of these techniques is when the first milk of cow is milked directly onto the ground for the ancestors. In this manner, milking onto the ground shows reverence, acknowledgment and gratitude. However, milking onto the ground also symbolises despair, loss and misfortune. This is seen in the proverbs “*kwafa igula lamasi*” translates to ‘the calabash of sour-milk broke’, i.e. their last hopes were shattered. Also in Shaka’s praise poem, one finds the proverb: “*Kwaf’ amasi kwaf’ uqephe*” (the sour milk got spilt and the dish got broken) referring to the Qwabe clan’s dismal situation. Also, *uselahl’ amathunga* (he has thrown away the milk pails) translates to a person who is in a desperate position. However, in this poem, the poet swears not to give up right until the last stanza:

*Woshi! Niqambe nishilo, ngimfunge angizuduba*  
(Oh my goodness! It won’t happen, I won’t surrender.)

In spite of all difficulties faced, the poet has intrinsic motivation not to give up. This is the strong message the poet passes to the reader.

### 3.4 Conclusion

A deconstructive reading of Maphumulo’s poetic text according to rhetoricity yielded very curious results. The poem “*Indwaba*” demonstrated that none of the interpretations are in conflict with each other or compete against each other. As de Man highlights, to assert one meaning is to undermine and deny the others. To read the poem in one way only, is to ignore or fail to recognize that it also sponsors some other interpretation that subverts meaning. In the poem examined, it was again confirmed that meaning never finally settles into a single assertion but instead is fractured and multiple, circulating among opposed senses.

Ellis (1989: 126) says the following:

...a poem really means whatever any reader seriously believes it to mean ... there is no limit to these meanings since the mind did find in the text whatever it is looking for.

It is true with the poem "*Indwamba*" because one may think that it is about cattle only and curdled milk but the figurative language and symbols used give the reader multiplicity of meanings.

Coddon (2013: 73) agrees with Ellis with the following words:

One may envisage an endless regression of dialectical interpretation and readings without any stable, essential meaning. In short, a text may possess so many different meanings that it cannot have a meaning.

In reading in different meanings in Maphumulo's work, the maxim 'sense precedes reference' matters as the researcher's use of language to designate objects always depends on their possessing a set of definitional criteria by which to pick those objects out. De Saussure takes account of the referent only as a kind of object presumed to exist but strictly inaccessible to knowledge, since everything we know must always be structured a priori by terms and categories of our language. The fundamental relationship for Saussure is that between signifier and signified, the word as a sign and the concept which serves to communicate.

In the reading of Maphumulo's poetry, an attempt was made to centre less on poetry's licence to reveal moral contingencies and focus more on the revelatory capacity of poetry to create complex illusions. This was achieved by bringing to the foreground certain surface features of words, like similarities of sound, root meanings as well as reverse values of words, which are crucial to the overall meanings of the poems. On deeper investigation, Maphumulo's poems absolutely

refuse to yield to a simple interpretation whereby a coherent and consistent pattern of imagery, thought and feeling is revealed. Instead, one is confronted with shifting values and abrupt displacements of meaning. It became impossible to sustain a univocal reading, for the language explodes into a multiplicity of meaning. The above observations should, moreover, suffice to caution against any attempt to discover a consistent pattern in Maphumulo's employment of symbols. The values and significance with which any given symbol is endowed are determined by the immediate poetic context and not by an eternal, transcendental, coherent, closed system. This will be fully explained in a further chapter.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE ROLE OF INFLUENCE IN MAPHUMULO'S POETRY

#### 4.1 Introduction

The main aim in this chapter is to discuss influences in Maphumulo's poetry and to show how these influences contribute towards further meaning. There are several factors that make up the poet's background, which may consciously or subconsciously flavour his work. Influence in poetry (or intertextuality in a deconstructive reading) will exhibit the writer's control of archaic textual, biblical, traditional, political, societal and other influences. As regards influence in poetry, Bloom states that: "No poem stands on its own, but always in relation to another" (Selden & Widdowson, 1993: 153). This does not mean that the work of art is merely repetition of previous artists' work but instead that the various influences are giving shape and meaning to the new work of art. Iyasere (1975: 107) however sounds the following warning to the African writer as regards influence:

The modern African writer is, to his indigenous tradition, as a snail to his shell. Even in a foreign habitat or Western tradition, a snail never leaves its shell behind.

A deconstructive reading of Maphumulo's poetry will exhibit many influences, amongst which biblical, traditional, western and other influences. Although the critical procedures of deconstruction inform the survey of the poetry throughout, the reading is not dictated to by these procedures. According to the deconstruction theory, language is unavoidably rhetorical, it is impossible to unravel the tropes of language by means of language. All that is possible, deconstruction attests, is to deploy a variety of rhetorical strategies, sometimes concurrently, in an attempt to illuminate the rhetorical maze of the text. Deconstructive procedure simply

demands an improved method of reading in every reading. Thus for Derrida the meaning of a text is always unfolding just ahead of the interpreter, unrolling in front of him or her like a never-ending carpet whose final edge never reveals itself (Hawthorn, 1992:33).

## **4.2 Influence in deconstruction**

Influence is a term used in literary history for the impact that a writer, a work, or a school of writers has on individual writer or work. Bloom, in Harmon and Holman (1986: 257), states that:

...influence involves a misprision or misreading, something quite remarkable – of a previous writer as an unconscious strategy of creative so that every poem is a misinterpretation of a hypothetical parent.

Influence may be defined as the presence of certain elements in an art piece or text - consciously or subconsciously induced by the former work to produce such elements. Where the author of the latter work is consciously under the power of the earlier author – as is the case with emulation or imitation - the influence will be overt and readily identifiable. In other instances, the influence will be covert, like for example “where the author or poet of the latter work is only subconsciously stimulated by the former work or where he infuses certain elements in his ingenuity” (Msimang, 1986b: 8). In this regard, deconstruction holds that for a writer to write after the event (belatedly), poets must enter a sort of psychic struggle to create an imaginative space. This process involves ‘misreading’ their masters’ work or influences in order to produce a new interpretation - a kind of self-deconstruction.

Msimang’s elaboration gives light to the difference between pure imitation and influence in a work of art. In all the poems already analysed in this research, it is

clear that Maphumulo's work exhibits influences of tradition, indigenous culture as well as Western influences.

Ntuli (1984: 15), an isiZulu scholar, says the following:

...an artist cannot work in a vacuum. For him to produce anything, a number of influences work on him. In the first place, these influences are his experiences which he expressed in the medium of his choice. In the second place he is influenced by the models of expression found in his cultural and artistic environment.

What Ntuli says about influence is compatible with the statement by Larson and Smalley (1972: 39), who describe culture as a "blueprint":

It guides the behaviour in a group, makes us sensitive to matters of status, and helps us know what others expect from us and what will happen if we do not live up to their expectations. Different cultures are the underlying structures which make a square community square.

It is clear from the above statement that no society exists without a culture to reflect the needs of human beings. The human being's existence depends on culture. It is the aim of this chapter to establish the extent to which tradition or culture has influenced Maphumulo's poetry. It will also be indicated how the poet has combined the independent elements from the works that influenced his writing.

#### **4.3 Influences in Maphumulo's poetry**

Influence as a literary strategy helps writers to be more creative in their writing. Similarly, the influences that Maphumulo has experienced have shaped his work. The creativity aspect is also observed in Foucault who was influenced by Louis Althusser as Gane (1986: 2-3) states:

And it is certainly important to note, as Louis Althusser, the leading French Marxist philosopher has remarked, he (Foucault) was a pupil of mine, and 'something' from my writings has passed into his, including certain of my formulations. But under his pen and in his thought even the meanings he gives to formulations he has borrowed from me are transformed into another, quite different meanings than my own.

There is also no doubt that Maphumulo was influenced and the influence helped him or his works to be shaped and to be expressive. These influences will consequently be examined. This examination will focus on proverbs, oral poetry, natural phenomena and traditional prose.

#### **4.3.1 Proverbs as a source of influence in Maphumulo's poetry**

The Oxford Dictionary defines a proverb as a "short pithy saying in general use, adage" (Stevenson, 2010: 1430). Krappe (1964: 143) pronounces about the proverb:

A proverb represents in its essential form, some homely truth expressed in a concise manner so as to recommend itself to a more or less extended circle. It may express the general truth literally, by a mere statement of fact.

Proverbs are ordinary, everyday words and statements. They cease to be ordinary, yet people begin to accept them as clever expressions of some truth, therefore, the people must accept an expression in order to give it the status of a proverb. Such acceptance is spontaneous, as people use an expression because they like it and because it appeals to listeners.

Nyembezi (1990: xii) says the following:

...all proverbs, whatever situation they describe, whether they are humorous or grim, seem to have a common base in that they may all serve to instruct.

However, it would be incorrect to say that proverbs are formed with a teaching purpose in mind. What happens is that the expression, after being evolved, may be regarded by the people as an appropriate of instructing.

Nyembezi (1990: xii) further says that proverbs constitute:

...a collection of the experiences of people, experiences some of which have been learned the hard way. Proverbs are also useful means of studying people.

This shows that people are observant, for the habits of birds and animals and the behaviour of nature in general, do not go unobserved. They reveal what people adore, what they hate and what they respect. They reveal what people's outlook on life is, and will provide an insight into the character of the people. It has been said that proverbs reflect the deep knowledge of folk people. Proverbs in Maphumulo's poems appears in various forms, for example, he employs proverbs in their original format or abbreviated versions of the proverbs. This will be consequently illustrated.

#### **4.3.1.1 The original form of the proverb is retained**

By the original form of the proverb, the external physical shape of the proverb is being referred to. The form of the proverb refers to its internal arrangement, which is the lexical item, which makes up the proverb. Maphumulo uses the original form of a proverb as it is in his poetry. The following examples will be used to exemplify this element:

*"Ngivika amagalelo emvelo" (Iminduze, 1986: 44)*

*Ngembath' emzimben' isikhumba senkukhu,  
Ngiyakuhtoniph' uyingqwele ngingekwenze lutho,*

*Ngiyakuhloniph' bus' embusweni wakho,  
Izintaba azihlengan' abantu bayahlangana,  
Akusigxobo saguga namagxolo aso,  
Ukhumbul' izwibela labulal' indlovu,  
Usungibamba ngesidlozan' ungifoshis' okoMbhekaphansi,  
Ungakhohlw' induk' ishay' imviki.*

(I ward off natural pains,  
And safeguard my body,  
I respect you,  
And be a ruler in your kingdom,  
My time will come one day,  
You'll grow old one day,  
Remember, I'll grow and become strong  
Don't forget, I will become strong and fight for myself.)

The proverb "*Akukho sigxobo saguga namagxolo aso*" (No block ever grows old with its bark) means a block of wood, when still young, will have bark covering it. The bark peels off from the tree as it ages until it eventually becomes quite bare. Similarly, as a person ages, the features of his younger self disappears, is stripped away similarly to the bark of a tree. As one can see a tree is old by the bare trunk, one can also see a person is old by their aged features. A variant of this proverb is "*Akusibonda saguga namaxolo aso*" (There is no block that grows old with its bark) (Nyembezi, 1954: 148). Another meaning may be an encouragement to the poet to do well, since an obstacle will be without strength.

The next proverb is "*Izwibela labulal' indlovu*" (The splinter killed an elephant). Nyembezi (1954: 181) states that whether such an incident ever occurred is hard to tell, and that one should rather look at the reference as being figurative. The saying is utilised to indicate that persons must be careful of little things because they may prove their undoing. This isiZulu meaning agrees with the English dictionary which describes this proverb as meaning, serious results come from a very insignificant cause. Variants of the proverbs are "*Ibhizela ladi' indlovu*" and "*Ijubel ladi' indlovu*" (A splinter destroyed an elephant). The poet acknowledges that

although his opponent is stronger than him, he may defeat him. This proverb serves as a warning to his opponent.

The proverb "*Induk' ishay' imviki*" (The stick strikes the wizard at defence) refers to the pastime occurrence where, while they were herding, boys practise fighting with each other by means of sticks (Nyembezi, 1954: 100). This exercise was not only for play, but also to prepare the young herders for fighting with boys of other villages. They were training in attacking and defending with the sticks. As can be expected, some boys became expert at manipulating sticks, and so become well-known for being masters at attacking and defending. However, even the most proficient of these fighters always had an unforeseen blow which he could not parry. In this manner the proverb warns against boasting about one's capabilities, for similar to an expert stick-fighter being struck by another, the possibility is always there that he will too be humiliated. Pride can very easily come to a fall. He is hopeful that he will prevail over the hero.

The proverbs are the models of expression that a poet finds in his immediate cultural environment. Maphumulo communicates different and significant messages through a vehicle of expression that is familiar and understandable to most of his people, educated and illiterate. The poet is aware that it is impossible to defeat nature and he does not lose hope to succeed in future.

This is in accordance with Iyasere's viewpoint, especially where he says that a disregard of the cultural context may lead to the mutilation of the art. He concludes by saying:

My point is that a culture-sensitive approach, informed by an intelligent understanding of the traditional background, will prove more responsible to the unique nativism of African writers (Iyasere, 1975: 109).

#### 4.3.1.2 Elliptic proverbs in Maphumulo's poetry

Ellipsis is one of the techniques that promote word economy in poetry. It is this feature of word saving or word elision which gives rise to rhythmical forms. Nyembezi (1992: 12) says the following about elision:

...if unobserved, may go a long way towards destroying the effect of the proverb. First of all, we observe that whole words may be left out, and the prosaic form changed, allow of the more poetic proverbial form.

Cohen (1973: 184) says that the technique involves the omission of some of the words from the proverbs and put it this way:

Ellipsis is the omission of words or syntactical elements either natural or deliberate.

Ellipsis in proverbs is one of the poetic, prominent features that carry effective messages. IsiZulu proverbs do not employ an elaborate style. In many cases the proverb is a simple statement with only a few words. There are those, however, which employ more words, and are thus more elaborate in style. From the subject of the discarding of words, we will continue to a consideration of the elision of vowels whose effectiveness is similar to that of the elision of final vowel or initial elision.

For the purpose of this research project we shall confine ourselves only to those proverbs where a single word or more have been left out from the proverb, as well as those with a final elision and examine how Maphumulo used these in his poems.

In the poem "*EDlangezwa kwaNgqondonkulu*" (At Dlangezwa at the place of Ngqondonkulu), half the structure of the proverb has been used:



*“Nowazibopha ngexhama wabonakal’ umuvi”*

(Tied itself with the belt and successful is the wasp)

The full proverb is *“Uyadela umuvi wona wazibopha ngexhama wabonakala”* (Happy is the wasp which tied itself with a belt successfully) (Nyembezi, 1954: 94). *“Umuvi”* is a wasp, a kind of the insect which has a narrow waist, black and the yellow stripes and a powerful sting. As the waist of a wasp is so tiny, it must be very difficult for the insect to actually tie a belt to it. So if the wasp succeeds in doing so, he regards himself as very lucky and happy. A young man may say this proverb to a girl he is wooing, bemoaning the fact that he is not able to show real feelings so that she may appreciate his sincerity and accept him. The expression means that he is happy person who, when attempting to do a thing, succeeds. In the poem, the speaker states that education is about making sacrifices which learners should do and at the end the learner will pass the grade. Broadly, it applies to sacrifices which one do in life. Complete dedication is necessary similarly to that which God commands – you must put your “whole heart and your whole soul and mind” (Matthew 22:37) into succeeding.

Poets, in many instances, tamper with the proverb’s fixed form. A poet bends and twists the syntax of the proverb to suit his own purpose. He may introduce a new word-order, or move around the semantic materials of the proverb from original positions. In this manner, the proverb has been “made strange” or defamiliarized. Defamiliarization carries with it additional meanings. Eichenbaum (in Lemon and Reis, 1965: 129) has the following to say about defamiliarization:

As words get into verse they are, as it were, taken out of ordinary speech. They are surrounded by a new aura of meaning. One may say that the concept of defamiliarization is brought by the use of literary devices such as symbols, similes, personification and metaphors; by the use of these poetic devices we no longer regard the objects of day today experience as being typical and familiar.

Finnegan (2012: 379) states that for the poet today or indeed for the speaker who is an artist in the use of words, the proverb is a model of compressed, forced language. There is, therefore, a slim chance for poets to eliminate the use of proverbs in their poetry. The poetic qualities like ellipsis and defamiliarization are some of the features that put the idiomatic expressions on a higher level than that of ordinary language.

#### **4.3.2 Oral poetry as a source of influence in Maphumulo's poetry**

Cope (1968: 25) says that the word “*izibongo*” means praises. It is a plural noun of which the singular means ‘surname’: one’s “*isibongo*” is the name of one’s clan. Grant (1927: 201) furthermore states that the word “*isibongo*” is derived from the isiZulu word “*ukubonga*” (to give thanks, to praise, to say grace).

The two types of traditional isiZulu poetry are “*imilolozelo*” (lullabies) and “*izibongo*” (praise poems) (Ntuli, 1984: 16). What is generally known as “*imilolozelo*” includes other types of poetic pieces like refrains from traditional narratives, bird songs and dialogues. Mzolo classifies praises of kings, chiefs, heroes and warriors on the one hand, and the praises of clans (*izithakazelo*) on the other (1977: 73).

Lestrade (in Rycroft and Ngcobo, 1988: 11) describes the praise poem as:

A type of composition intermediate between the pure, mainly narrative epic, and the pure, mainly apostrophic ode, being a combination of exclamatory narration and laudatory apostrophizing.

Msimang (1991: 25) says the following:

*Izibongo yinkondlo yokutusa. Kungaba yinkondlo emfushanyana nje, imvama eyimigqa emibili echaza ubunjalo balowo obongwayo nxa imfishane kanjalo*

*ngesilungu sithi yi-praise name. Singalinganisa nje ngensizwa ende ngethambo. Izonele isukume igiye esibayeni noma odwendweni bese ziyihasha zithi:*

*'Mthwazi lothwishi,  
Ntanga ezenabel' ekweneni'.*

*Kokunye zithi:*

*"Ntamb' ende kalayini".*

*Uma impofu ngebala uzozwa ziyihasha zithi:*

*"Nkunz' ebomvu Neshoba layo".*

*Nxa imnyama zizothi:*

*"Nkunz' emnyama iyazon' izithole".*

*Uma kukhona okunye laba bantu asebekwenzile emphakathini, nakho kuzophawulwa kwelulwe lezi zibongo ezichaza ngobunjalo kuphela. Kokunye sekugcina sekuyinkondlo ende bo (praise poem)! Izibongo ezinde yilezo zamakhosi. Sekuvamile ukuba kuthi lapho kuxoxwa ngezibongo abaningi bacabangae ngezibongo zamakhosi kube wukuphela kwezibongo kanti cha. Akubongwa amakhosi odwa, noma ngubani angabongwa. Eqinisweni nje akubongwa abantu bodwa, kubongwa ngisho izilwane ngisho nezinto ezingaphili mbala. Namhlanje izinsizwa nabanumzane babebonga amahhashi abo, izingqathamvumane ezisika ukhasi ngomtelebhelo (Msimang, 1991: 7-8).*

(Praise-poems are poems of praise. It can be a shorter poem in this way, generally two lines describing the personality of the one who is praised. If it is short like that in English we say it is praise-name. We may compare that to a tall young man. Once he stands up and dances (of males) at the kraal or at the bridal party then they will eulogize by saying:

*'Mthwazi of straightness,*

*Mate who is spreading and overgrown tall with grass',*

*Sometimes they say:*

*'Long rope of line',*

*If he is tawny in complexion you will hear them eulogizing by saying:*

*'The red bull and its tail',*

*If he is black they will say:*

*'Black bull which is spoiling the calves.'*)

If there is something these people have done in the community - that would also be mentioned by extending these praises which describes its reality.

Maybe they will end-up being the long poem like praise-poem! Long praise – poem are those of chiefs. Usually when someone talks about praise-poem many people think of the chiefs only in fact that is not true. It is not the praise-poem of chiefs only, or whoever is also praised. The truth is that not only people are praised; animals are praised even non-living things. Today young men and men they are praising their horses, *izingqathavumane* (strong-willed horses) to display with the trot (of horse)).

Cope (1968: 34) comments about the different types of praise poems:

The praise-poems are therefore eulogies combining some of the qualities of both the ode and the epic. Those of the eighteenth century tend to be more lyric and ode-like and also more personal, and those of the nineteenth century tend to be more heroic and epic like also more national.

In the following sections, the use of praise poems in Maphumulo's poetry will be discussed.

#### **4.3.2.1 Use of praise poems**

Praises have been in the past extended to diversity of objects like animals, birds, cars, divining bones and many other objects. It is the praises of the amaZulu chiefs and kings that are of great significance to us. Very few, if any of our prominent modern poets have escaped the influence of oral poetry. The composers of these poems are no longer known. The free movement of material enabled most poets to use these compositions in their works too.

Maphumulo's praise poems appear original, but have hints of influences as well. The poem "*Ncome wawungenakuncoma*" (Blood River you were not going to praise) (2004: 49) is an original work based on a historical event. The historical story of the war of Blood River (Cope, 1968: 9)

...when Piet Retief visited Dingane to ask for his permission for the settlement of Natal by the Boers, Dingane's response was to accuse the Boers of cattle theft. They (Boers) denied the charge and set out to recover the cattle from the culprit. When they returned to eMgungundlovu, a document was signed granting them a stay in Natal. On the following day they were invited to come unarmed to witness a war dance before returning to Natal. In the middle of the festivities Dingane shouted an order and they were set upon, dressed off to the place of execution, and were battered to death. Dingane now sent out his regiments to destroy the Boers encamped in Natal, and a massacre ensued. When reinforcements arrived, the Boers invaded Zululand but were driven out again. The British settlers also sent out a force to avenge the Boers, for they were on friendly terms at the time, but this force was badly beaten on the banks of the Thukela (Tugela) river. This disaster was followed by the destruction of Durban, while the residents took refuge on a ship in the Bay. This ship was shortly to sail with all the missionaries on board and most of the settlers. The Boers now rallied under Pretorius, and the result was the defeat of the Zulus at the Battle of Blood River (*Impi yaseNcome*) in December 1838. They then advanced to eMgungundlovu and burnt it to the ground. A republic was established.

In the poem based on the historical event, Maphumulo has used alliteration and assonance well in his poetry, for they are inherent in system of grammatical agreement itself:

*"Mo-o-o! Mo-o-o! Mo-o-o!"*

The above alliteration of the consonant 'm', and assonance of the vowel 'o', express the sound of the bull (or bullock, calf, ox). The narrator utilises Dingane's heroes or warriors defeated at the Blood River as the strong and powerful bull's crying sound when is killed or stabbed. In modern English usage "ox" is applied especially to a castrated bull, but in the original language, the word often renders "ox" and "oxen" in various translations which are not interpreted in this restricted sense. Although castration is the method ordinarily employed for breaking bulls for

service as draft animals, the bull was used to farm operations, for ploughing and threshing. In Bible symbolism the bull is used to denote power and strength.

Other sounds of the alliteration of consonants are 'g', 'k' and assonance of the vowel 'e'. For example; "*Gekege! Gekege! Gekege!*" The alliteration of the consonants 'g' and 'k' produces the rough and mechanical sound in the ear of the reader which suggests the warlike-cry, which says:

*"Wathinta umfazi uthinta imbokodo"*  
(You strike a woman, you strike the grinding stone)

He says:

*"Sikhuz' isaga: "Wathint'imbokodo uzokufa".*  
(We vent the saying: You strike the grinding stone you die)

The elided word "a woman" and the shifting of the words of the saying make this example very interesting. The word 'woman' is omitted as women were not warriors in the olden days, and thus were not at the battle of Ncome. The threat is thus directly transposed onto the warriors – the grinding stone – if you strike them, you will die. This line could also be referring to the allusion that the Boers who visited Dingane at Mgungundlovu made advances to the amaZulu women in the kraal.

Writing must therefore be iterable – repeatable, in the sense of repeatable with a difference. Iterability undermines "context" as a final governor of meanings (Collins and Mayblin, 1996: 83). Maphumulo uses repetition in the form of iterability at the end of each stanza. We find this, for example, in "*Ncome wawungenakuncoma!*" This poem has seven stanzas in each stanza at the end of each line of the stanza there is repetition.

We find this repetition:

*“Noma kanjani Ncome wawungenakuncoma”.*  
(No matter what Blood River, you could not prevail)

This is a praise poem of the battle of Blood River and the repeated word at the end of the penultimate of each stanza is most effectively used to highlight that the poet is making a repeated plea for calmness. He is repeating the phrase to make a divine intervention for the battle to come to an end. He is appealing for peace after a storm/battle. We appreciate the care with which Maphumulo handle repetition or refrain and his appeal for peace.

#### **4.3.2.3 Use of parallelism in praise poems**

Parallelism is the repeated statement of identical construction with different words expressing the same idea. Cope (1968: 41) discusses the occurrence of a type of repetition called parallelism, which is one features in “*izibongo*” (praise poem) and says:

A comparison between these two types of parallelism shows two types of parallelism - perfect parallelism repeats the idea with different words, whereas parallelism, by linking, advances the idea by means of an identical word or stem or root.

Parallelism contributes to the aesthetic necessity of form, which gives unity and satisfactory completeness to a poem. It sometimes occurs because the poet expresses the enormity of the event.

In parallelism one expects each unit member of the verse to be balanced by another unit in the second member. If this correspondence is found between all units, parallelism is found.

Instances of simple repetitive parallelism are found in Maphumulo's poem called "*Nobhutshuzwayo Mntakababa*" (Soccer your father's son) and "*iQoma*" (Large grass-woven basket).

One unit in the first member is repeated in the second member:

(a)  
*Bahleka*  
'They laugh'

(b)  
*ingahleki*  
'did not laugh'

(a)  
*Bakhala*  
'They cry'

(b)  
*behleka*  
'whilst they laugh'

This is contradictory parallelism, which emphasize the sadness of the loser and the happiness of the winner. The same pattern is found in this example from "*Iyunivesithi YakwaZulu*" (University of Zululand):

(a) (b) (c) (d)  
*Ebhul' amaphiko kwaye kwahlek' uNkabinde*  
(Flaps wings until Nkabinde laughed)

(a) (b) (c) (d)  
*Yabhul' amaphiko kwenanel' uDlamini*  
(It flapped wings Dlamini appreciated)

There is an omission here of what flaps the wings, but it had an effect on both Nkabinde and Dlamini as mentioned in the excerpts. There is a balance between synonymic and antonymic parallelism, with added meaning that Nkabinde's contribution to the University of Zululand was huge, similarly also that of Dlamini. Ntuli says linking is another form of parallelism. In this discussion he applies synthesis of the method used by Cope (1968: 42). Maphumulo uses parallelism by linking in the praise poem. This usually happens when similar words (or stems, or



roots) appear at the beginning of successive lines (initial linking) or at the end (final linking). In examining linking in Maphumulo's poetry, only the linking of words, stems and roots will be dealt with and repetition on formatives will be left out for the purpose of this study.

An example of the final linking is found in "*Nobhutshuzwayo Mntakababa*" (Soccer my father's son) in these lines:

1. *Ndamndam' abayibuka kuqhibuk' izihlathi;*
2. *Bayikhab' abafana kwajaj' uMahlathi.*
3. *Ngibabone beyinyathela beyishwiba phezulu,*
4. *Ngamehlw' engqondo ngayibon' iphezulu;*
5. *Izulu lithethile, wagid' uMgidi*
6. *Laye nalo lathetha ligidis' okukaMgidi.*

- (1. Watching the soccer match makes fans smile;
2. When footballers play, fans become excited.
3. I've watched them playing,
4. In my imagination I kept on seeing the soccer match;
5. When the ball hits the net, fans danced with jubilation.
6. The ball bounced up and down.)

The poet uses the noun stem "*-hlathi*" in the first line, and the adverb stem "*phezulu*" in the third and fourth lines, the noun stem "*-Mgidi*" in the fifth and sixth lines. The actual word in each instance is repeated which serves as an emphasis 'on cracking cheeks; higher up and dance' - it is a joyous occasion. It is an aesthetic feature in the praise poem, even to the reader.

#### **4.3.3 Nature as a source of influence in Maphumulo's poetry**

Some of Maphumulo's poems describe nature, particularly animals, birds and natural phenomena. Some of Maphumulo's poems get their poignancy from his adept use of natural imagery to clarify certain points or a lesson for the reader. The

poet gives a description of these animals' or birds' behaviour. These poems generally describe nature as clearly as possible. Byron gives a warning about such descriptions:

Descriptive poetry has been ranked as among the lowest branches of the art, and the descriptive is a mere ornament, but which should never form 'the subject' of the poem (Galt, 1828: 548).

Brooks and Warren (1988: 92) share the same idea, and add:

A mere listing of qualities gives a rather flat description: it may be accurate but it does not stir the imagination.

Such comments indicate that in such descriptions we expect to be given a new view of the object. The poet should provoke certain responses to the known natural phenomenon. In this sub-section, the researcher wishes to examine some of the poems on nature in order to appreciate whether the poet did succeed in giving the reader a new view, but also to see which influences these poems allude to. For the purpose of this study, I will analyse two poems from "*Iminduze*" (Natal lilies): "*Umnenke*" (Snail) and "*Ujekamanzi*" (Dragon-fly).

#### *Umnenke*

1. *Kuthangi benginamathel' ekhwanini ngibuka*
2. *Izinhlabisamakhwelo ziyaluza zishayana ngamakhanda;*
3. *Zibhal' imibhalo esibhebheni samanzi,*
4. *Ziyibhala ziyicisha; ziyicisha ziyibhala,*
5. *Zibhala ngesivinini ngesandla semfene,*
6. *Ngithe ngiyafunda ngagcina ngingafundanga.*
  
7. *'Zolo bengisemadwaleni ngibuka abafowethu*
8. *BakoNkonjane noGomongco bebangisan' umkhathi;*
9. *Kukhanya balobe; kucisheke koNkonjane,*
10. *Kubusica balobe; kucisheke koGomongco,*
11. *Bathandaze ngomsindo kwinkosi yomkhathi,*

12. *Baphumule baqale iqhubekíngaphenduli.*

13. *Namhlanje kuqopha mina kulamadwala,*

14. *Okuqoshwe emadwaleni kungecishe kalula,*

15. *Kwaqoshwa ngesineke kwaqopheka kwafundeka,*

16. *Bangawaqhekeza ngomadumelana nezimbola lamadwala,*

17. *Kusaphazeke izingcwecwe zigcwal' izinkalo,*

18. *Bayofik' abanesineke bawahlanganise kuhlanganiseke.*

19. *Njengamanje ngiphe ubunjalo balabafowethu,*

20. *UNonkalankala obuka emuva naphambili,*

21. *UNonwabu obuka phansi naphezulu,*

22. *Mangihambe kancane ngikhethe' amabala.*

23. *Ngihambe lukeke ngigweme lomhlaba,*

24. *Kungani ngingenazinyawo; kungani ngimehlwana?*

(1. Long ago life was moving slow

2. Whistlers were moving about debating issues;

3. Writing information that will disappear,

4. It is captured and it disappears and it is recaptured and rewritten,

5. They write swiftly with the unreadable handwriting,

6. When I tried to read, it became a futile exercise.

7. Yesterday, I was at large rocks, looking at my brothers

8. Swallows and Bats disputing a claim over the sky;

9. When there's light they write, knowledge gets extinguished from Swallows,

10. When it becomes dark, they write and knowledge becomes erased from Bats,

11. They are begging noisy prayers from the king of the sky,

12. They rest and begin to make progress, the king did not answer.

13. Today I am writing on the rocks,

14. That has been written on the rocks will never be erased,

15. I patiently write and it will last,

16. They will dismantle these large rocks,

17. And scatter the pieces,

18. The patient ones will come and assemble them.

19. Currently, show me the true nature of my brothers,

20. Crab is not easy to understand,
21. Chameleons cannot be trusted,
22. Let me walk cautiously,
23. And avoid troubles,
24. "Why don't I have legs; why do I have small eyes?"

The speaker in this poem is personified as a snail, who admires the swallows and bats as they can fly and write on the water and in the sky. Immediately one finds the up/down binary along with the sky/earth, fly/walk, speech/writing binaries. The narrator of the poem presents the reader with a picture of something natural (a snail, swallows, bats) on which he imposes an imaginative interpretation. The emphasis on the imagination suggests how the mind is central in the poem, and the awareness of how the poet creates ideas in the imagination puts a new importance on the fantasies that can be created in the mind. The creative insight of the poet allows him both to perceive and create an order in the natural world. The speaker of the poem wants to shift from the problems of the real world to how he would like things to be. In a literal flight of imagination, a make-believe world is created in the speaker's mind, which is, however, always in conflict with the real world. The snail cannot fly; he cannot even walk sideways like a crab or gingerly like a chameleon, as he has no legs. The snail only has one foot to slowly crawl along. As such, perfection is transient, the writing in the sky and on the water is erased as the disorder of life intrudes into the poem, similarly to the rock being shattered into pieces and scattered in lines 16-17. In the end, the poem demonstrates that reality is more complex and confusing than any order the poet might create. The writing of the swallows disappears, it is unreadable; the writing on the rock – though readable at first - is fractured and fragmented. Similarly, in line 8 "*BakoNkonjane noGomongco bebangisan' umkhathi*" (Of Swallows and Bats disputing claim over the sky), the word "*Gomongco*" is unreadable but if the trace 'gco' is replaced by 'qo', the word is "*Gomonqo*" or "*ilulwane*" (bat). The snail questions his make-up which is tantamount to questioning the Creator instead of appreciating all conceptions.

Deconstruction views the birth of thought as synonymous with the birth of metaphor, and that metaphor (as a substitution or supplément) leads to the infinite deferral and play of meaning. In this regard, Maphumulo's poem could also denote frustration about the creative process and creative muse. This can especially be seen in the binary speech/writing, which is an allusion to Derrida. According to Derrida (1997: 6) in this binary the first term is always related to the natural, origin, source and so on. Speech existed before writing was invented. As such, despite the fact that these terms are supposed to be equal pairs in our thought, in casting the key term 'speech' against its opposite, 'writing', speech has been privileged as the first term - it is the positive term, the *logos* (ultimate truth). Writing is derivative, it merely represents speech. In Derrida's view, writing has characteristics that can't be decided within these oppositions. It plays across good and bad, curative and injurious, as Derrida ascertained with his analysis of the word *pharmakon*. Derrida therefore gives writing precedence over speech in order to demonstrate that language cannot represent something non-linguistic. Speech thus falls under writing: it is merely a phonetic form of writing.

In this poem Maphumulo also disrupts the 'either/or' structure of the binary opposition of speech/writing and makes writing an undecidable. He prioritizes first writing and then speech. The snail speaks and expresses his admiration for those writing in the sky and on water. As the poet indicates, writing doesn't need the presence of the writer, or of the writer's consciousness. Even after the death of the poet, his written works continue to produce effects beyond his presence and beyond the present actuality of his meaning. However, the order of writing is distance, delay, ambiguity, and death - 'dead' meaning, not the living meaning of a present speaker. In this regard the binary of writing/erasing fits in well - the poet's writing cannot be erased, but will live forever.

The writing in the sky is also reminiscent of the book of Exodus 31 verse 18 where “...he (God) gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone written on by God’s finger”. In the third stanza the poet is determined to put marks (writing) on the large rock which will not be erased similar to the writing of God in Exodus, as the rock or stone is durable. However, the poet further points out in lines 14-18 that even rocks may be destroyed by lightning (from the sky) and borers (from the earth), but he is hopeful that people (readers of his work) will be patient and restore his written work (analyse his poetry).

The next poem appears to be about a dragon-fly, an insect with a stick-like body and two pairs of large wings, which curiously fly on top of clean water at a dam or river:

*Ujekamanzi*

1. *Selokhu ngacingana nobumin’ emanzini,*
2. *Ngindizel’ ukucwila ngicwilel’ ukundiza,*
3. *Ucweb’ umfula ngizibon’ ubumina,*
4. *Udungeke kushabalale ubumina bokuzibona.*
  
5. *Lomise isibuko sobumina sishe,*
6. *Ngisicinge ngenkani ngibhajw’ obhukwini,*
7. *Ngikhululwe osiyazi bengiphilisel’ ukuqonda,*
8. *Ngiphunyuke ngiphindel’ ekucingeni ubumina.*
  
9. *Liphoswa izandla lenqakwa ezinye,*
10. *Kusombuluk’ indalo ebigigwe ngumhlaba,*
11. *Ngokwendalo ngisombuluke ngiyocingana nobumina.*
  
12. *Izimpiko zamandl’ omsindo azisezwakali,*
13. *Sekwasal’ unembez’ oyisisinga sengqondo.*
14. *Nokho ngisayocing’ impilo eyababhuduli.*

- (1. Time and again I have been examining myself,
2. But there’s no progress,
3. Sometimes I am able to know and understand myself,

4. When problems come my true self disappear.
5. In trying times my true nature becomes dry,
6. When trying to find myself I get stuck,
7. The knowledgeable cure me in order to restore my understanding,
8. I will escape in a quest to seek self- introspection.
9. There will be those who reject me and those who will welcome me,
10. Problems become resolved,
11. Naturally, I will go and look for my identity.
12. The noisy strong wind is now quiet,
13. The conscience is the anchor of my life.
14. Nevertheless, I will go and find life from those knowledgeable.)

This poem exhibits strong connections with the previous poem analysed as in both poems a creature of nature is questioning their nature or makeup. The dragon-fly is continuously searching for answers as to his makeup, confused as to whether he flies to dive under water or dives to fly under the water. This confusion is similarly to human beings who are continuously searching for answers to their problems, to understand their true nature. This strive for answers as to their true nature may be like “chasing after the wind” (Ecclesiastes 4:6).

The poem also presents the theme that knowledge is power. Knowledgeable people assist one to understand. The poet's ability to describe nature is extraordinary, yet Maphumulo has also strongly exhibited his love for culture in poems already analysed. These two concepts make the traditional binary opposition of nature versus culture. The dragon-fly searches for his true nature, and as the speaker of the poem attests to, such a yearning is unattainable, for nature turns out to be a self-deconstructive term. As Derrida (1997: 104) illustrated in *Of Grammatology*, culture is initially beneficial - nature comes first and culture comes afterwards; culture is grounded in and added to the natural state. As culture lingers on, it comes to substitute for nature, thereby creating a detriment. In

other words, culture supplements nature in two ways - as addition and as substitution. But the notion of an unsupplemented nature has no truth-value; it is only the expression of a desire - an illusion. Nature is shown to be always already supplemented; that is, nature from the start is structured as differential. The concept of nature is a concept produced, as are all concepts, by culture, and furthermore nature's identity is constituted as that which is not culture. Nature as presented in this poem is dependent upon there always already being culture before it in order for it to be what it is, as it is described in the poet's cultural associations. In short, nature comes after and is derived from culture. The system has been reversed, the hierarchy collapsed.

#### **4.3.4 Traditional prose narratives as a source of influence in Maphumulo's poetry**

Traditional isiZulu prose narratives or folktales are referred to by a variety of different names. Callaway (1868: 1), the first scholar and collector of isiZulu folktales described folktales as "*izinganekwane*", and to the Xhosa tales as "*iintsomi*". Makhambeni explains these types of tales as follows:

*Lapha thina sithi inganekwane yindaba abadala abayixoxela izingane zabo. Indaba lena ingase ibe ngeyempilo yasendulo noma insumansumane yezilwane nabantu nokunye. Kokunye ibe isifundo esithile ngokuziphatha kwabantu. Kungenzeka futhi ukuba indaba iphathelene noMvelinqangi noma nemvelo nendalo, nokunye ikhulume ngezomlando* (1986: 1).

(Here we say the folktale is the story of the old people they told their children. This story it could be about the olden day's story or the folktales about the animals and the people and other things. Sometimes it could be a lesson of some sort of the behaviour of people. It can happen that the story is about God or nature and creation, and other narrating about history.)

Scheub (1975: 3) defines "*inganekwane*" (folktale) as being:



...a performing art which has, as its mainspring, a core cliché '(a song, chant or saying) which is, during a performance, developed, expanded, and dramatized before an audience.

The above definition suggests that "*inganekwane*" consists of a narrative or a performer, who carries out the performing part during the narration of the story, and listener. Msimang (1986: 22) distinguishes the genre of folktales as follows:

*Izinganekwane* and *izinsumansumane* are traditional tales told primarily for entertainment. They are but one genre of Zulu oral tradition, quite distinct from oral poetry ... The *inganekwane* is a tale, which is not believed to be true, which is related primarily for entertainment and which revolves around the doings – often – of men, animals and numerous extraordinary creatures ... the finer distinction between *inganekwane* and *insumansumane* has disappeared and folktales are generally referred to as *izinganekwane*. *Insumansumane* refers more specifically to something extraordinary, absurd and fantastic.

Both Oosthuizen (1977:38) and Msimang suggest that the function of the folktales is to instruct and teach in amaZulu culture. Bascom's classification (1965:3-5) consists of three prose narratives which are distinguishable in isiZulu folklore, namely: myth, legends and folktales but he alludes to folktale stories. In the scope of this study, Maphumulo was influenced by "*insumansumane*" (folktales) in some of his poems, particularly the "*insumo*" (fable).

#### **4.3.4.1 Influence of traditional prose characters in Maphumulo's poems**

IsiZulu folktales, fables and myths abound in characters which had a tremendous influence on the poet. In the poem "*Mina nesibani sami*" (I and my lamp), Maphumulo has made use of animal characters:

1. *Ngidlala nabangane owofudu nentulo,*
2. *Wokugibela ngifinyelele esigodlweni.*
3. *Ngiyazibuka izintulo zintantatheka nentabakazi,*
4. *Umjaho wentulo ukushelela ngesivinini*

5. *Ibuyel'emuva, yedlulwe nawufudu.*
6. *Intulo ihlonyekiswa abagcini sigodlo,*
7. *Ufudu ukucothoza lusukela kuMdali,*
8. *Leyo ntaba eshudulwa oNontulo noNofudu.*  
(Izinsungulo 1980: 44)

- (1. I play with my friends, the tortoise and the lizard,
2. Climbing to arrive at the royal kraal.
3. I am watching the lizards staggering about on the high mountains,
4. The race of the lizard is sliding at high speed
5. It moves backwards and it gets passed by the tortoise.
6. The lizards gets plunged by the kraal owners,
7. The slowness of the tortoise comes from the creator
8. Those mountains which is shuffled by the lizard and the tortoise.)

This poem presents an allusion to the fable of the tortoise and the lizard. In this fable, these two animals run a race to see who is the fastest. The lizard swiftly runs away, but falls asleep along the way, while the tortoise slowly progresses, eventually passes the sleeping lizard and wins the race. The moral of the story is to never give up, to persevere. This tale is suggestive of the proverbs “*Inj’ iyawaqed’ amanzi ngolimi*” (The dog will finish the water with its tongue) and “*Inkonjane yakhela ngodaka*” (A swallow builds with mud) (Nyembezi, 1954: 125). These sayings are expressions of encouragement, for patience and perseverance will eventually win the day.

The fable is also reminiscent of the myth of how death originated “*Unwabu nentulo*” (the chameleon and the lizard) as summarised in the proverb “*Sibamb’ elentulo*” (We are holding to that [word] of the lizard). In this amaZulu myth, the creator sent a chameleon to inform the people on earth that they will not die. However, the pace of the chameleon was very slow and it even got distracted by *ubukhwebezane* berries along the way. When the creator saw this, he sent a lizard to tell the people

that they would indeed die. After the lizard had already delivered his message, the chameleon arrived, however the people informed him that they have already received the message from the lizard. According to Nyembezi (1954: 197), the expression means that one will abide to the first information and not change their mind afterwards. The message in this poem is that similarly as one must accept death as God sanctioned it; one must accept one's nature because it is God's creation.

The binary oppositions in this poem are: true/false, friend/enemy, slow/quick, God/human, mountain/kraal, present/past, folktales/poetry, human/animal, love/hate. The speaker prefers the slowness as opposed to the quickness/fastness; he therefore prefers/likes the tortoise and opposes/dislikes the lizard. This connects well with the above myth as lizards are hated by the amaZulu up until today as the messenger of death. The poet likes the slowness of the tortoise because of its thoroughness in doing things, such as reaching the royal kraal and its success being rewarded. One can further state that the speaker prefers deliberateness and meticulousness in attaining educational goals. The binary quick/slow is also alluded to in the Bible: "Everyone must be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19).

This poem also triggers memories of many other isiZulu poets who found inspiration for education in nature and animals. For instance, Ntuli has written a similar type of poem "*Uvete Ewindini*" (Frog on a window pane) in *Amehlo kaZulu* (1975: 2) wherein the poet uses the metaphor of a frog scaling a window pane; slipping, sliding down yet always continuing to climb up with the struggle for education. The pursuit of education is equated with climbing a steep and slippery hill:

*Ak' imi ngedwa kant' engiqoph' intaba,  
Intab' emshipiliz' ebushelezi!*

(So I am not the only one to venture up the hill,  
A smooth and slippery hill!)

Similar imagery is found in Maphumulo's poem. Still, Maphumulo, in his fascination with nature, produces a new creation as he is observant of nature, but does not, as Brooks and Warren (1988: 92) put it, simply give "a mere listing of qualities", but strikes a fair balance between sensory experience and imagination.

#### **4.3.5 Philosophical influence as a source of influence in Maphumulo's poetry**

The Greek word "*Phi-lo-so-pha*" literary means "love of wisdom". In modern usage the term relates to human endeavours to understand and interpret through reason and speculation of the whole human experience, the underlying causes and principles of reality. This section will focus on a few of Maphumulo's poems considered to be philosophical. Writing on the nature of this type of poetry, Read as quoted in Ntuli (1984:122) states:

Metaphysical poetry is abstract because, like metaphysics, it deals with concepts. But, as poetry it is no less 'emotional' than lyrical poetry. There is a good measure of interpretation through reason and speculation of the whole human experience.

Philosophical or constructive thought about the nature of life should rather serve as a stimulus to the creative writer's imagination, and not as an end in itself. The argument and the conclusion are of less important value than the poetic imagination which is a hallmark of any good poetry.

Each of Maphumulo's philosophical poems deal with a different theme, but their common characteristic is that they are all fundamentally concerned with ideas and

concepts. They cover a wide variety of themes, such as education, the tyranny of death, religion, and specific aspects of human nature.

In the poem “*Ekuboleni Kunempilo*” (In decay there is life), philosophical origins are observable. People have denied the reality of death, and the immortal soul has the crutch to leap to reason. Maphumulo gives a logical explanation of the denial of his father’s death. He says that when you sow any seed it first decays before it sprouts into a new plant. The productive ground is favourable for the new plant to grow from it. The resurrection, literally meaning “standing up again”, refers to rising up from death. Resurrection involves a reactivation of the life pattern of the individual, which life pattern God has retained in his memory.

Maphumulo personifies people with seed in the following excerpt:

*Zikhala ngembewu ezihlwanyele ingaphehliwe,  
Ingenazindundundu,ingenabhu nazihlava eziphehlayo,  
Ibanjwe ngesidlozana ngumhlabathi obomvu (Iqoma 1992: 11).*

(They complain about the sown unshakable seed,  
Without corn, less common stalk borer which are shaken up,  
Stuck in the red soil)

Similar to seed that is unable to sprout because of the unproductive soil; people who do not have strong roots seem to be constantly hampered by troubles. This is the refrain from the third to the fifth last line of the penultimate of each stanza, and is representative of the parable of the sower in Mark 4:15-17, and Matthew 13:5.

The refrain words “*ekuboleni kunempilo*” (in decay there is life) represents a *pharmakon*, an ambiguous word as it reverses the life/death binary. There is life in death, but also death in life. As a *pharmakon*, it is undecidable, inhabiting both the curative and the poisonous (Derrida, 1981: 103). Death does not mean the end of life, for as seeds may decay and then produce a new plant, the body may decay

with death, but the immortal soul enters a new life. As such, the refrain represents comforting words for the great loss the speaker has experienced.

The resurrection of the seed may allude directly to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter writes that He was “put to death in the flesh, but was made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). His fellow apostle Paul draws upon an agricultural illustration in this regard. He states: “What you sow is not made alive unless first it dies; and as for what you sow, you sow, not the body that will develop, but a bare grain, it may be, of wheat or any one of the rest; but God gives it a body just as it has pleased him, and to each of the seeds its own body ... So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised up in corruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised up in glory ... It is sown a physical body, it is raised up a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:36-44). One can see that the above excerpt features strongly in Maphumulo’s poem. The ‘seed’ may die, and earthly or fleshly bodies of corruptible flesh are given up, to be resurrected in a glorious incorruptible form. As such, the ‘seed’ is a *pharmakon* which inhabits the hope of life for the dead as an immortal soul or being resurrected to a spiritual being.

This poem has suitably illustrated the poet’s projection of philosophical insight as concern the topic of death. The manner in which the poet handled the subject matter illustrates well, as Ntuli (1984: 122) states in his paraphrase of Read: “the triumph of reason brings about aesthetic satisfaction”.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter it was realised that a text only becomes successful when it is read. The reader who reads the text allocates meaning to it. This meaning is produced at the moment of reading due to the cross-fertilization of the package of textual material. Similarly, the writer is a reader of texts (in the broadest sense) before he is a creator of texts. His works are consequently replete with references, quotations

and influences of every kind. The influences or intertextuality shows that as texts are dependent upon other texts that they absorb and transform, more meaning is produced. This meaning may extend into infinity as new knowledge is gained by the reader of the text. Plottel and Charney (1978: xiv) hold:

Every script is a script of another script since such utterance holds the trace of another utterance; everything written carries the mark of a gap with something else that is, or was, written even the ultimate signifier itself is a text of another text. In a sense all writing is a collage of other writing, of language, and of tradition.

As a poet cannot live in a vacuum, it was seen that a number of influences worked on Maphumulo. In the first place these influences are his personal experiences expressed in isiZulu by means of specific word choice. In the second place he is influenced by the models of expression found in his cultural and artistic environment. Maphumulo grew up amongst the amaZulu who have their own traditional type of poetry called "*izibongo*". It is thus not a surprise that he had drawn from this poetry in making his own composition. The traditional isiZulu prose narratives and proverbs also provided Maphumulo with much that he could use to enrich his work. Nature and natural phenomena were another great influence in Maphumulo's life which he uses while expressing opinions on education, death and personal struggles, amongst others. His poems about especially death exhibit philosophical concerns in his quest to find answers to it. Still, although an analysis of intertextuality in Maphumulo's poetry has found influence, and the claim is made that no artist can be completely independent and original; the poet still produces his own unique verse.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This research focused on deconstructing a selection of Maphumulo's poetry. Poetry, as a form of literature, is arduous to analyse as it is a language used in a special way. It is distinguished from prose in that its words form patterns of verse or sound by the use of metre, rhythm, and rhyme; as well as the use of figurative language which appeals strongly to the imagination. Deconstruction, as a post-structural approach, furthermore employs difficult concepts in a reading. However, this study only utilised certain aspects of deconstruction. In this final chapter, the main observations and the final concluding remarks are given.

#### **5.2 Main observations**

As stated before, deconstruction is rather a philosophy than a literary theory. The notion also comprises of no specific method - there are no specific guidelines to follow when closely reading a text. The procedure simply criticises the sign and the possibility of meaning in a text. Peck and Coyle (1993:194) view this as follows:

A deconstructive reading is a sort of double reading: it acknowledges the way in which the writer attempts to order things, but then points to the contradictions and problems in the text, the complications that the writer cannot pull into her or his system. The critic's own response, however, can also be deconstructed, for the critic, too, is involved in trying to create coherence where none exists.



The general introduction to the topic was supplied in Chapter 1. As this study only entails a selection of deconstructive aspects, some background and definitions were supplied in this chapter. The concepts of deconstruction, logocentrism, binary oppositions, pharmakon, supplement, trace, erasure, aporias, différance, intertextuality, and iterability were briefly elucidated. These concepts were applied in the following chapters where the application of these concepts to Maphumulo's poetry assisted in further explaining the terms. In these analyses, it was clear that deconstruction does not constitute a traditional analysis of poetry. Although any theory may be applied in order to gain as many meanings as possible, it was seen that deconstruction attempts to interplay the various meanings at the same time without giving prominence to a singular meaning. The first chapter also gave a short biographical sketch of A.M Maphumulo. This was indeed very helpful as the respective influences in his life were presented which assisted greatly in the chapter on intertextuality.

The deconstructive reading in this research commenced in Chapter 2 with the deconstructing of themes in Maphumulo's poetry. The themes of death and education were selected as these themes are prevalent in the poems of Maphumulo. The poems chosen on death were "*KwaMaphumulo zaphuma esibayeni*" (They were left without any cattle at Maphumulo's kraal), and "*Ningakhele Inqaba Ngasolwandle*" (Built me a fortress next to the ocean), while the poems which centred on education were "*EDlangezwa KwaNgqondonkulu*" (At Dlangenzwa at the place of greatest minds (Ngqondonkulu)); and "*Engikubone kwenzeka*" (My experiences about what I saw/noticed or observed). The deconstructive literary theoretical concepts applied on the selected poems of Maphumulo were mainly binary oppositions, différance, trace, logocentrism, aporia, supplement and iterability. By means of binaries the aim was to unsettle false binaries and other calcified ways of thinking. The main binary used in the theme of death was "life/death", while the theme of education involved "knowledge/ignorance" and "lightness/darkness". As Maphumulo's poems are so

rich in influence, certain aspects of intertextuality were already illustrated in the chapter. It was seen that by applying deconstructive strategies, one can uncover much from analysing the themes in Maphumulo's poems. Although these poems are apparently on death and education, hidden themes are revealed as the selected poems represent an introspective quest in each case. Culture - which features very prominently in the selected poems - was also deconstructed.

In Chapter 3, similar deconstructive literary theoretical concepts were applied; however the objective in this chapter was to pay specific attention to the multiplicity of meaning in Maphumulo's poetry. Multiplicity of meaning is achieved not only by reading the text many times, but also by interpreting the readings of various readers, as well as the author's own interpretations. The fact that a word or a text can be repeated and interpreted in various contexts could serve as evidence of a continual shift in meaning. Again, binary oppositions were made use of to show how meaning can be partly undermined in the process of a textual reading, but the new concepts of rhetoricity, allusion and figurality were also introduced and applied. The poem "*Indwamba*" (curdled milk) was analysed in order to extract as many meanings as possible. It was shown that although the poem is at first sight about the beauty of culture, more interpretations may be extracted, such as: a life lesson, a hero or champion, education, milk as nutritious food, milk as symbol of protection and fertility, and milk as such resisting evil or harm. As the poet introduces the ancestors in the poem and their admiration for *amasi*, it was seen that the act of milking onto the ground shows reverence, acknowledgment and gratitude; while it could also symbolise despair, loss and misfortune. This analysis demonstrated that a text never has a single meaning, but is a crossroads of multiple ambiguous meanings. Still, meanings cannot be planted in set places, they can only be randomly scattered or 'disseminated'. As such, the meanings words have can never be guaranteed one hundred percent. Words are consequently always 'contaminated' by their opposites, or interfered with by their own history. As

such, deconstruction does not care to change things; it wants to tease language and the reader's mind by its puns and paradoxes.

Chapter 4 concerned the influences found in Maphumulo's poetry. It was realised that for the author to write as he does a number of influences have worked on him. In Maphumulo's case, it has been discovered that both traditional and western influences inspired him. The traditional influences which shaped his work are culture, nature, language, customs, values, norms, proverbs, idioms, traditional poetry and traditional prose narratives, while the western influence which had an affect on Maphumulo is Christianity. While this chapter examined influence in Maphumulo's poems; intertextuality, which is related to influence, was also discussed. Intertextuality signifies that a literary text is linked to other, earlier texts by allusions or by the assimilation of the features of earlier texts. As the poet is the reader of other poets before he creates his own poems, the poet act as both "host" to other texts as well as a "parasite" of other texts. In this reading, one must be aware of double meanings as one has to compare the meaning of an earlier poem and to that of a later one. In the poem "*Umnenke*" (Snail), it was shown how Maphumulo unconsciously refers to the binary of speech/writing, an opposition of much importance in Derrida's works. Deconstruction is not primarily concerned with establishing priorities but with demonstrating how writing highlights the mechanism of *différance* and dissemination which are obliterated and repressed by privileging the spoken word. As Maphumulo in this poem also gives preference to writing over speech, it is shown that a deconstructive reading of this text has revealed that its author secretly implies the opposite of what he declares openly. In this manner, a deconstructive reading may illuminate a text without exhausting discussion of it, mainly because a word in a poem differs each time it is used, yet it retains the traces of its other uses which should also be interpreted as additional meanings to the poem.

### 5.3 Conclusion

This research has shown that Maphumulo is a master at his craft. He, as a poet, is very sensitive to the nature of the language he chooses to employ as a medium of communication, viz, isiZulu. This sensitiveness facilitates the flow in his sentence patterns and elevates the standard of his poetic diction. Maphumulo's control of the language is not only attributed to his being a first-language speaker of isiZulu but also to his love of the language and detailed studies he has done in isiZulu. Although this study only entailed an analysis of certain aspects of his poetry, Maphumulo blends stylistic devices mainly used in traditional poetry viz. repetition, rhythm and linking sometimes even elision of word/phrase, with so-called western characteristics found in European poetry, namely rhyme, assonance and consonance. This study has also illustrated that Maphumulo's poetry does not reject deconstruction, but works through it, conserving its strengths. As such, it is certain that literary works in isiZulu do not lend themselves to absolutely certain interpretations that sum them up once and for all, but contain multiple, never-ending meanings.

In this regard, the theory of deconstruction can be viewed as the liberator of all texts. It does not want to bind a single text to certain interpretations, but sets these free. The meaning of any text consequently remains open to contradictory readings. It is hoped that this study has provided its readers with an introduction to deconstruction and set their thinking not only on the aspects of deconstruction but criticism in general.

As there is hardly any research done on deconstruction in African languages as well as in isiZulu literature, it is suggested that more studies on deconstructive analyses in the isiZulu language be completed. It is hoped that this study will be a contribution in this regard; however, the research has only dealt with certain aspects of deconstruction. It is thus recommended that other isiZulu critics

continue with analysis Maphumulo's poetry as regards the further aspects of deconstruction.

Finally, although this is the concluding chapter of this study, it does not pretend to wrap up the argument of the preceding chapters. Instead, this chapter tries to point to a new line of inquiry as it is hoped that the information in this research will lead to new perspectives and literary criticism. These continuing studies will further contribute to the subject matter and will only be an asset to isiZulu literary theory.

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